



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



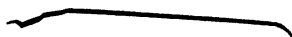
3 3433 07486875 7

Presented by

Mrs. Henry R. Hoyt.....

to the

New York Public Library







THE
PARSON'S DAUGHTER.



BY THE AUTHOR
OF
"SAYINGS AND DOINGS," &c.

"One child he had, a daughter chaste and fair,
His age's comfort, and his fortune's heir.
They called her EMMA:—"

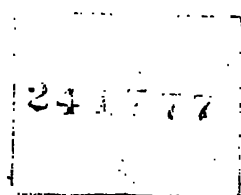
PRIOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD.

1833.



THE
SON'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

could by contraries execute all things."

SHAKESPEARE.

collected by the reader, perhaps, that we left
ge at his hotel in London, waiting, with his
he arrival of Dr MacGopus and the chaplain
is necessary to the conduct of our history to
e important personages, and leave our poor
l Mrs Harbottle to the uninterrupted perusal
vished for despatch. It is also necessary to
expectations with respect to their visitors
realized—the Doctor came, but the chaplain
y for his absence.

it that Lady Frances was extremely pleased
is—for, although the Doctor had something
brupt in his manner towards men, he was, by
s soft as oil and sweet as honey to the ladies.
nt of sentimentality rather operated against
yship's opinion, and at any other time might
proved fatal to his progress in her good opi-
the present moment, as he took the turn of
e upon his romantic attachment to the Par-
r, it was extremely gratifying to her, most
w, that she had herself ascertained, under his
t her son was so entirely devoted to her.

1," said the Doctor, "before your ladyship
what a silly thing it would be to go and com-

mit himself to a young woman like that. I admit Emma is a very pretty name, and is associated in my mind with as charming a creature as ever lived—and his lordship is pleased sometimes to joke me thereupon—but I am one person, and he is another, and he himself is another person from what he was a fortnight ago.”

“Exactly,” said Lady Frances.

“And as I tell him, my lady,” continued MacGopus, taking a huge pinch of snuff, “the very change in his position ought, as well for her sake as his own, to make a change in the whole affair. The young body might do admirably well for the wife of a half-pay commander in the navy, who would be ill at ease as a peeress of the realm, and —”

“No, but, Doctor,” interrupted Lady Frances, “George’s position in society is not so much altered by his unexpected accession to the title: he was always of the same blood, you know—noble on both sides—and I should have had just as much objection to the match while he was a commander in the navy, and my son, and Lord Pevensy’s nephew, and Lord Weybridge’s cousin, as I have now.”

“Quere, my lady,” said MacGopus, “how did your ladyship’s family come by the title of Pevensy?”

“Oh, hang it,” interrupted George, “what has that to do with the subject we are discussing. The point upon which you choose to give your advice, and upon which we entirely differ, is that of the eligibility of Miss Lovell to be Lady Weybridge. My mother says she thinks I am not one bit exalted by my adventitious accession to the peerage, and therefore the thing is at an end. I quite agree with her, and as I had made up my mind to marry Miss Lovell when I was Captain Sheringham, I can carry that intention into practice as Lord Weybridge, without, as she admits, incurring either her displeasure or disapprobation.”

“Stop now,” said MacGopus, with an expression of something like anticipated satisfaction at what he was going to say, playing about his mouth; “when you was Captain Sheringham, Miss Lovell had not been the companion of a fugitive wife on a runaway expedition.”

“Oh for shame, MacGopus,” said Lord Weybridge, “how can you attach any importance to that event—do you imagine that a man like Mr Lovell, a clergyman of the establishment, exemplary in every point of his character, would have permitted his child to be the partner of such an expedition, unless he had satisfied himself, beyond the chance of deception, of the purity and propriety of Mrs Harbottle’s character.”

“I don’t know,” said MacGopus, “the clergy of your church are no better than they should be.”

"And who amongst us is?" said Lord Weybridge, "I am vexed to hear a man of sense and judgment like yourself, fall into a vulgar cry against our clergy. Take them collectively, or take them individually, and I will stake my existence, that with fewer exceptions than are to be found proportionably in any other profession, such a body of men of piety, learning, charity, and benevolence, is not to be found on the face of the globe, as the clergy of the Church of England."

"George," said the Doctor, chuckling with delight, "what d'ye think of Doctor Doddipole of the Grampus, who went to prayers with ——"

"Think," interrupted Lord Weybridge—whose mother, by the way, invariably started back in her chair and stared whenever MacGopus called his Lordship George—"I think it was a disgrace to his cloth; but you are not to judge the many by the scoundrel few—you are not to stigmatize four or five thousand gentlemen because of their profession there are four or five vagabonds; nothing in the whole world is more detestable and degraded than a sensual dissipated parson."

"One thing if you please," said MacGopus, "a shabby sneaking, shuffling attorney—and exactly as much opposed to the high-minded gentlemanly well bred practitioner in that branch of the law as ——"

"Your friend Dr Doddipole is to my friend Mr Lovell," said Lord Weybridge, ——

"Stop now," said MacGopus, "who is Mr Lovell?"

"Why, psha," said George, "who is Mr Lovell?"

"Don't be angry, my dear George," said Lady Frances, "who was not exactly aware of the terms upon which her son and his prime minister were in the habit of living, "the doctor didn't remember at the moment."

"Not he—he argues only to provoke me, and if I were wise, mean, and wicked enough to turn my back on this dear delightful girl, to whom I feel myself bound by honour and affection, he would be the first to reproach me with my heartlessness and infidelity."

"Not I," said MacGopus, again taking snuff, "I have said you'll never marry her—I don't see why you should."

"I quite agree with the Doctor," said Lady Frances, "and I am very much indebted to him for having drawn you into so clear a declaration of your feelings and opinions with regard to the young lady."

"I see no necessity for disguise," said George, "and therefore cannot perceive the great advantage derivable from the Doctor's perverseness and ill breeding."

"My dear," said Lady Frances.

"Oh my lady," said the Doctor, as deliberately as if he had been fighting or amputating, at both of which performances he was universally allowed to be a remarkably steady hand—"that's only *his* way of talking—it is mighty easy to call *that* ill-breeding which does not exactly suit our fancy at the moment—I know professionally that no physic is pleasant, and no operation particularly agreeable. But the patient, when his cure is complete, is always grateful to the Doctor, although he wishes him at old Nick while he is actually suffering under his discipline."

"All that," said Lord Weybridge, "is vastly fine and vastly clever I dare say, and may amuse my mother; but I do not see what earthly right you can possibly have to interpose advice in a cause where you are retained by neither party."

"It puts your lordship into a passion," said MacGopus, "and that's something."

"It does put me into a passion, and I admit it," said Lord Weybridge; "and when you are in one of these infernal humours, I most heartily and sincerely wish you at Jericho."

"Quere now," interrupted the Doctor—"about Jericho—do you think that the Zakoun of our time is the same thing as the old balm of Mecca."

"Stuff," said his lordship.

"No stuff at all," said the Doctor; "I have been there and tasted the Myrabolam, the date, and the opobalsamum, and I wanted to know if you could give me any information."

"The deuce take it all," exclaimed his lordship, unable any longer to endure the torture of the Doctor's imperturbability, and starting out of his chair he bounced out of the room, banging the door after him with a report like that of a thirty-two pound cannonade.

"There," exclaimed Lady Frances, "now he's off."

"He'll come back again, my lady," said the Doctor, taking more snuff—"your ladyship has known him longer than I have, but I have seen more of him than your ladyship has—he ought not to marry this young lady—he is not pledged to her—and —"

"My dear Doctor," said Lady Frances, "I am sure you will forgive my earnestness, but seeing how completely we agree upon this point, let me intreat you, use the influence you possess over him and put an end to it—I have secured him from visiting Binford."

"Stay, my lady—where's Binford," said the Doctor.

"Binford," said her ladyship, not yet perfectly aware of the Doctor's peculiarities and wondering at the question—

"Why, Doctor—Binford is the place where my cottage is, and where —

"Oh, I see," said the Doctor—"go on, my lady."

"I say I have effectually prevented his return there—at all events, for the present."

"Stop, my lady," said the Doctor—"Why should you prevent his returning there?"

"In order," said Lady Frances, "to put an end, if possible, to his connexion with the Parson's daughter."

"Quere?" said MacGopus—"Why should you wish to put an end to his connexion with the Parson's daughter. Many peers have married Parson's daughters—many peers are parsons themselves. If she is good and amiable, and accomplished, I don't see —"

"Why, mercy on me," interrupted her ladyship—"have n't you yourself been arguing against the connexion—have n't you yourself pointed out all the numerous objections?"

"To be sure I have," said the Doctor, with one of his subdued laughs, "but that was only for argument sake—George is all for marrying her—I therefore differ from him—you are altogether against the match—upon totally different grounds—therefore I differ from your ladyship."

"How extremely provoking," said Lady Frances; "then you were not in earnest when you supported me in my views while my son was present."

"Never more in earnest in my life," said MacGopus.

"I really do not comprehend your character, Doctor," said Lady Frances, somewhat angry.

"You never will," said MacGopus. "Your son is old enough—wise enough—and now rich enough to make a choice; why should I interfere?—if I advised him not to marry, he would still marry if he chose; and I should have the satisfaction of making his wife my enemy for life, with the certainty that she would make him hate me too; and if he followed my suggestions, the same results would arise; with this only difference, that in addition to herself, all the young lady's family would hate me into the bargain."

"But he considers you his prime minister—his first councillor."

"No, he does not," said MacGopus; "if he respected my advice, or cared for my opinion, he would not bounce about and burst out of the room."

"But you irritate him by your inveterate coolness, which is so strongly opposed to his own fervour and volatility."

"That's the only chance I have of keeping him steady," replied the Doctor, "your ladyship will see in a quarter of an hour, when the effervescence has subsided, he will come back again, a most calm and reasonable creature."

"For my part," said Lady Frances, "I do not think calmness always a proof of rationality."

"I do," said MacGopus.

"Why now," continued her ladyship, "look at George—you talk of his effervescence subsiding—I know that with all that appearance of unsteadiness and thoughtlessness his attachments are firm and lasting."

"They are no such thing, my lady," replied the provoking stoic; "I have seen more of his attachments than you possibly can have seen—he's a weathercock—a dog-vane—The scud in the sky is not more easily affected by the wind than he by variety. At Madras, he —"

"Yes, yes, my dear sir," said Lady Frances, "but those were youthful indiscretions, and mere heartless flirtations and —"

"No such thing, my lady," said the Doctor; "each one of them was just as serious as the present affair; but change change did it, and may do it again. I don't advise, as I have already said; but if you want this Parson's daughter to be driven out of his head, throw him into the society of something new—and pretty—and gay—and graceful—and you'll see the result."

"It is the very experiment I am about to try," said her ladyship; "I mean to persuade him to collect a small agreeable party at his place in Worcestershire, and amongst them I shall secure one or two families of the very best sort, which have amongst them three or four of the most attractive girls of the year."

"Do no such thing," said MacGopus, "find out one family, with one daughter, and have them down, if you please. If she is amiable and handsome, she will appear ten thousand times more amiable, seen quietly in domestic life, without the excitement of rivalry, or the compulsion to show off. Let her be fair, gentle, and unassuming in manner—accomplished, but not showy—kind without pretension—and pious without ostentation;—and, above all, let her be a good daughter:—for of such stock come good wives."

"Why, my dear sir!" exclaimed Lady Frances, "you have exactly described the young person to whom he is at this moment attached. She is all you require for him."

"Why, then, how can you be so silly as to oppose their marriage?" said MacGopus, chuckling in an under tone, at having hit her ladyship hard.

"Silly, sir!" said Lady Frances, who was more puzzled by her new acquaintance than by any body she had ever met with; "I am not conscious that it is silly to require something more for a person destined, as George is, to move in a higher sphere."

"He requires no such thing, my lady," said the Doctor. "If Providence has given the young woman virtue, beauty, and ability, and disposition to make a husband's happiness, you ought to be thankful to that same Providence for having given *your* son the power of securing that happiness, by placing her in a sphere which, by your own account, she seems destined to adorn."

"Well," said Lady Frances, getting almost angry, "I have met with many people—but I declare, I never did see so extraordinary a person as yourself."

"I'm not in the least extraordinary, my lady," said MacGopus; "I speak plain truth."

"But you blow hot and cold with the same breath."

"No I don't. You think I do, as the foolish countryman did in the fable. I like to argue. I like to look on both sides, my lady."

"Then you mean to say that I am extremely silly, or selfish, or worldly, in opposing my son's marriage with Miss Lovell?"

"I mean no such thing," said MacGopus. "I cannot enter into your ladyship's views, because I never was a marquess's daughter, nor a baron's mother. I only say what I think. I cannot appreciate what you feel."

"Well, but then, why oppose the marriage?"

"I never did," said MacGopus. "On the contrary, I told you how you might put an end to it."

"I shall adopt your advice."

"It won't succeed if you do," said the Doctor.

"Why, five minutes ago you said it would."

"So I did," said the Doctor; "but then your ladyship had not told me what sort of a person the Parson's daughter was. I had heard George speak of her; but I have heard so many lovers describe their mistresses, that I have learnt to put but very little faith in their accuracy. Your ladyship, however, admits the likeness to what I supposed would win him, and to what he himself depicted as a portrait of his beloved. That alters the case."

"Why then," said her ladyship, "we end where we begun."

"No we don't," said the Doctor. "I started by opposing the marriage—now I end by supporting it."

"Have you become rational yet?" said Lord Weybridge, opening the door, and addressing the Doctor; "may I come in, and sit down in peace?"

"As far as I am concerned, yes," said the Doctor; "for I am going. I always conceive, when my host abandons me, that it is time I should retire. I did not think it right to

leave her ladyship alone; but now that you have thought proper to return, I'm off."

"To-morrow we start," said Lord Weybridge; "so sit down and finish your wine."

"I have finished my wine."

"Will you have some more?"

"None, I thank you."

"Come, Doctor," said Lady Frances, "stay for coffee."

"I never drink coffee, my lady."

"Do not go this minute," said her ladyship, who, not being yet accustomed to the strange, abrupt manners of the Doctor, felt assured that if he departed in his present humour, he would never return.

"I must," said MacGopus.

"Well, shake hands," said Lord Weybridge. "Good night, old fellow. Will you come down to Severnstoke?—we shall be there for a week or ten days, I dare say."

"We'll see. If Lady Frances wants my opinion or advice, perhaps her ladyship will summon me," said the Doctor, again laughing to himself with exultation at having, as he truly enough believed, puzzled her ladyship, as to his character, most amazingly.

"I," said Lady Frances, with one of those smiles for which she was *renommée*, "shall be always happy to see you."

"Ah," said the Doctor, "your ladyship is very good." And so making his bows and shaking hands with mother and son, the gallant philosopher betook himself to his *Tusculum* in the New Road.

CHAPTER II.

———"Tears

Stood upon her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gathered lily almost withered."

SHAKESPEARE.

It would be impossible properly to describe the sensation produced upon Emma and her friend by the contents of Mr Lovell's letters. That to Fanny, announced the result of his interview with the squire, as well as his promise, neither to follow nor molest her; and a declaration of his intention to make her an annual allowance of three thousand pounds per annum, a resolution which appeared so liberal in its charac-

to Emma, that she ventured to hope it might, by exhibiting to Fanny, not only the strength of his affection for her, but his conviction of her perfect innocence from every imputation which circumstances or the misrepresentation of servants might have cast upon her, induce the lady to overlook the past and return to her home and her natural protector; but all her avowals of admiration of the Squire's conduct produced only a faint smile upon Fanny's countenance, changed almost instantly to an expression, which convinced their friend, that the offence, whatever it might be, which he had committed was considered unpardonable by his lady, and that their separation was irrevocable.

But even her own position, and all the circumstances connected with it, appeared to occupy but a secondary place in the mind of Mrs Harbottle. The dreadful intelligence of Harvey's death had thrown into shade all selfish considerations, and although it appeared to Emma that she exhibited less wildness of manner, less eagerness and anxiety of mind after the fatal catastrophe had been announced to her, than while she was occupied solely with her own peculiar grief and misfortunes, the helplessness and wretchedness, against which she had during the previous day struggled, appeared entirely to overcome her. She had exerted herself to take the deciding step of her life, and under the operation of that stimulus she had endured much of mental excitement and bodily fatigue. The suspense, in which she naturally existed until she heard the result of her husband's conversation with Mr Lovell, was now terminated: she knew her fate; she knew that by the line of conduct Harbottle had been induced to pursue, her character was cleared—her quitting him justified. So far the circumstances of her case were altered; while the death of one whom she had so much esteemed, and who was remotely the cause of the general break-up at Binford, coming so suddenly to her knowledge, changed the nature of her feelings and excited in her bosom, which before had been agitated by her own personal distresses, a new and deeper feeling of regret for another.

"I am easier at heart to-day," said Fanny to Emma; "I can cry—but, Emma—happiness for me is gone for ever; —"

"My dearest friend," said Miss Lovell, "you must, indeed, calm yourself; this dreadful accident to poor Charles Harvey —"

"For mercy's sake," said Fanny, "in pity, spare me; never, as you value my existence, name his name. Poor! poor Charles Harvey!—he is gone! There can be no harm now in owning how much I esteemed him, how much

I admired him. But, dearest, dearest Emma, henceforward, from this hour, name him not !”

“ Rely upon me,” said Emma ; “ although I cannot but deeply grieve to see you so much affected by ——”

“ Affected !” interrupted Fanny. “ Oh ! Emma ! Oh ! if I could tell you all I have suffered !—all the horrors ——”

“ Again,” said Miss Lovell, “ let me intreat you to calm yourself. Trust to my discretion ; never again will I touch upon this subject ——”

“ Poor, poor Charles !” again sighed Fanny, as her head dropped on the pillow, already bathed with her tears.

Lovell’s letter to his daughter, was little more than a duplicate of that to her friend, except that it omitted some of the details which hers contained, connected with Harbottle’s arrangements, under the circumstances of her separation. Harbottle had himself left Binford, and several of the servants had been discharged ; but he proposed, it appeared, to return thither, in order that he might maintain his dignity and respectability by entertaining some parties of his convivial companions at the hall, and thus exhibit his independence of spirit and strength of mind ; for although he never could venture to suggest that the loss of his wife was the consequence of any misconduct of hers, he was determined that nobody should suppose him to be so weak of purpose or undetermined in character, as to be shaken or affected by her voluntary and sudden separation from him.

Amongst the principal points in Lovell’s letter to his daughter, his anxiety for her return home appeared particularly prominent, and she replied to his desire to see her back again, that she should only delay her journey homewards until Fanny was sufficiently restored, to be able to enter into the ordinary amusements and occupation of Mopeham House.

It was not until the expiration of the third day, that Fanny felt herself competent even to join the family circle down stairs. She was anxious to explain to her aunt the conditions under which she alone would consent to continue an inmate at her house ; and Miss Jarman was delighted, from the conversation which passed between them, to find that the allowance proposed by her husband was so liberal, as at once to stamp his view of the circumstances under which she had fled from his society ; but it was not at all difficult for Fanny to perceive, that she had taken a step for the preservation of her character nearly as desperate as that adopted by the memorable nuns of Cottingham ; and that no vestal ever was buried alive in greater security than she should be, immured in her present domicile in the society of Miss Jarman and her friend Miss Budd.

The young Count Alexis de Montenay, who made his appearance after breakfast, was to be sure a great relief to the general dullness of the *coterie*. There was a gaiety and grace in his manner—a playfulness, natural and constitutional, which rendered all he said agreeable, and all he did amusing. He appeared to pay more attention to Emma than Fanny; and it must be admitted that Emma, in the naturalness of her character and disposition, seemed to encourage a preference, which, within such limits as she proposed for it, there could be no great reason for her concealing.

The occupations of the Count, and his amusements, kept him a good deal separated from the ladies; he breakfasted and dined early, so that it was only in the evenings that they had much of his society; his time was much occupied in acquiring the English language, and in order to begin his favourite study betimes in the morning, he generally retired early to rest at night.

Mrs Harbottle appeared to take more pleasure in his society than her friend, although, as has already been observed, the Count evidently preferred Emma to her, and his little *galantries* spoken in a foreign language with a broken accent, amused and pleased both the ladies. Had it not been for him, the monotony of Mopeham would have been dreadful; the mistress of the house moved out never, and never permitted Miss Budd to quit her—a pony phaeton, chiefly for the conveyance of the Count to the town, about half a mile distant, was the only carriage on the establishment, and the only presentable neighbour lived at a considerable distance. However, Mr Lovell had been directed by the Squire to inform his lady that whenever she wished it, her own chariot with her favourite pair of horses should immediately be sent to her, and the Squire farther added, that he hoped she would make no scruple in letting Mr Lovell know when she desired to have it.

Altogether the separation between these people had something in it very extraordinary, and Emma, who never could extract the real truth from her friend, began almost to be a convert to Harbottle's cause; she had heard Fanny here, at the very last moment, calling upon the name of the man to whom she had confessed herself almost attached, and seen her decidedly more affected by his death than by any other event which had occurred during the whole progress of the affair; and here was her husband, deserted, and avowedly detested by his wife, loading her with liberality, and heaping favours and attentions upon her, even in the minutest particulars.

That Emma's mind ever misgave her, or that she for a

moment doubted her father's propriety in permitting her to accompany Mrs Harbottle, cannot be said ; but it must be admitted, that so many odd, and to her, inexplicable circumstances had occurred since their departure from Binford, that she felt every disposition to obey her parent's injunctions and return home as soon as she possibly could, without disarranging the comfort and tranquillity of her friend.

While things were thus proceeding at Mopeham, Mrs Harbottle gradually recovering from the excess of grief into which she had been plunged, Emma looking forward to home, and Count Alexis gaining ground every day in the good graces of both ladies, Lord Weybridge, who doubted a little the accounts brought to London by his lady mother, of the events which had occurred at Binford, and startled a little by her earnestness and activity to prevent his return thither, took occasion the day before their departure for Worcestershire, to write to Lovell in the most friendly terms, telling him that he had heard from lady Frances of the sudden flight of the squire's lady, and of her being accompanied by Miss Lovell—that although he felt he had no right to make any further inquiries upon the subject, he could not but recollect the happy hours he had passed in his and Miss Lovell's society, which recollections, added to the deep interest those associations had inspired, induced him to inquire what the cause of separation between Harbottle and his lady really was, perfectly certain, that having permitted his amiable and exemplary daughter to accompany the lady, he could have no difficulty in furnishing him with such information, as might, by justifying Mrs Harbottle, entirely exonerate Miss Lovell and himself from the charge which might otherwise be adduced against them, of protecting vice or supporting impropriety ; that he was quite sure what the answer he should receive, would be—that the anxiety he felt upon the subject, would, he trusted, be a sufficient apology for the intrusion, and he remained, &c. &c. &c.

To this letter Lord Weybridge received the following answer.

Binford Rectory, Oct. 4, 18—.

“DEAR LORD WEYBRIDGE,

“In acknowledging your lordship's kind letter of yesterday, permit me in the first place, to return you my sincere thanks for the interest you are good enough to express for myself and my daughter. I do assure you, that nothing can be more gratifying to me, nor I am sure more agreeable to her, than to feel that we are not forgotten under the circumstances which have occasioned your lordship's removal from our neighbourhood—

"Being thus flattered by your attention, it naturally follows that your lordship should feel anxious for some information, upon a point which, I admit, places the characters of three persons in a very doubtful position. If I could explain the circumstances under which Mrs Harbottle so promptly decided to quit her husband, I should have no difficulty in exonerating her and ourselves, who, in the minds of many here, and I fear in the minds of some who are gone hence, are labouring under a suspicion, if not of impropriety, at least of incaution beyond vindication; but I cannot do it—I can afford you no satisfactory reason for the lady's flight—no justification for her abrupt departure. Our characters must stand or fall by the tenour of our foregone lives, and we are, it must be admitted, considerably strengthened, by the fact, that Mr Harbottle, who is looked upon by many as an injured man and a deserted husband, has bestowed upon his wife a most liberal allowance, has removed from his service the domestics she declined to take with her, and, in short, has exhibited by every means in his power, his conviction of her innocence and propriety.

"The real ground of their disunion is incompatibility of temper. This is admitted by both parties. The immediate cause of their sudden separation, therefore, matters little, and if it did, as I have already said, I am so pledged to *her* that I could not explain it even to your lordship, whose good opinion I am so anxious to retain.

"My daughter will remain with her friend only as long as it appears essential to Mrs Harbottle's comfort, and the safety of her health. She will then return; but I apprehend the best days of Binford are past. The Hall I suspect, if not deserted, will be occupied by persons not exactly suitable to our quiet habits, and Lady Frances I apprehend—your lordship, of course, knows best—has quitted Dale Cottage for ever.

"I was quite sure what your lordship's feelings about poor Charles Harvey would be. The circumstances are peculiarly painful,—it seems that he met with Colonel Bradfield's shooting party accidentally, and having joined it, was invited by the colonel to dine with him. At this dinner some bets were made about the relative strength of wines, or quantities of wine which different men could drink, and Harvey, who had been in extremely low spirits during and after dinner, was induced to swallow more port or claret, or whatever the wine suggested for the experiment might have been, than he was in the habit of drinking; he had no servant with him when he left Colonel Bradfield's, but rode off with one or two of the neighbours from whom he parted at some point of the road, and made directly across Broustead

Common on his way to the Mordaunts with whom he was on a visit. He knew the country well, and if he had been perfectly collected would have remembered that a gravel pit had been opened in the middle of the common, right in his path from road to road, and which was most shamefully left without any railing or other protection. It was in this pit he was found with his horse, both dead, soon after daylight, when the labourers came to work at the pit. In the fall of the horse poor Harvey had pitched over its head, and the spine was dislocated, he had else no mark or bruise about his person, and must have died instantaneously.

"His remains were removed to his own place in Berkshire, from Mr Mordaunt's, whither they had been conveyed after the coroner's inquest had been held, a ceremony perfectly useless on this occasion, except as establishing the fact of finding the body by the labourers. There never was a more gentlemanly being created, and never, that I have seen, a more general display of unaffected grief, than his premature death has occasioned.

"I shall not fail to acquaint my daughter with your kindness in making inquiries after her. The day may come when I, or if I am gone, she may be enabled to explain our present mystery; but if I duly appreciate your lordship's feelings towards us, I think I may venture to hope that you will give us credit for having acted neither imprudently nor improperly, but as it became Christians; I should, however, add, that at this moment, Emma herself is as ignorant as your lordship of the *immediate cause* of the separation. Before I die, if circumstances do not permit of her knowing it earlier, I shall confide it to her for her own justification; but as I assure you most solemnly and sincerely it affects no human being except the parties themselves, its immediate declaration, if it were not prevented by the most important considerations that can exist, would reflect not the slightest shadow of blame upon Mrs Harbottle, who with myself must alone remain in possession of the truth.

"I mention this, because, even supposing me to blame, it is I who am wholly to blame; Emma is, I repeat, entirely ignorant of the facts of which I am in possession, and in supporting and accompanying Mrs Harbottle acts not only under my sanction, but with my advice, both of which she considers sufficient justifications for her own conduct, without stopping to investigate that of her father.

"In the sincerest wish and prayer, that every happiness may attend your lordship through life, and with gratitude for your kindness and the interest you continue to express towards us, I remain, dear Lord Weybridge,

"Your Lordship's faithful servant,
"Lord Weybridge. W. LOVELL."

P. S.—“There is a probability, if I should be sufficiently strong, of our being in London before Christmas; should your lordship be in town at that period, we shall hope to meet you.”

This letter which, according to Lord Weybridge's desire, the Rector addressed to him in Worcestershire, and which his lordship duly received there, was not sufficiently satisfactory for him to show to his mother as a sort of “certificate” of the family prudence; however, when he recollected that in her first letter on the subject, she suggested that Emma had taken the journey without her father's sanction, he felt comparatively easy, not that his doubts and misgivings were entirely at rest. It seemed so strange that a young woman should be forced or persuaded into such an excursion, without knowing what grounds her companion had for undertaking it, that between his apprehensions on the one hand, and the constant worry to which he was exposed on the other, by the persuasions and suggestions, and insinuations and declarations of Lady Frances, he began, most certainly, not to waver in the constancy of his attachment to Emma, but to doubt more seriously than he ever yet had done, whether it were likely to terminate propitiously.

According to her well-devised design, Lady Frances persuaded George just to visit the “dear” Duchess for a day or two on their way into Worcestershire, and to invite her and her lovely daughter to accompany them, a bidding which they most readily accepted. And then on his approach to Severnstroke, he was welcomed by his tenants with bands of music, and garlands of flowers, and passed under triumphal arches built across the road. And there were roastings of sheep and ringings of bells, and the bright eyes of Lady Katharine, and the Duchess full of vivacity and gaiety, were gleaming and sparkling around him, and the gentlemen of the county were mustered there to give him a cordial reception, and the bettermost inhabitants of the neighbouring town, and amongst them the clergyman and his daughters; and when the Lady Katharine began to ridicule the two gawky girls who stood blushing up to their elbows, George felt an inward horror; but whether of the *gaucherie* at which the aristocratic ladies were sneering, or at the idea of having a wife of his own, perhaps, subjected to a similar ordeal, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, that from the day of his arrival at Severnstroke, until the expiration of a fortnight, he thought less of Emma than he ever had thought of her, during any similar period of time since their acquaintance had first begun.

Events had occurred during that fortnight which could not

have been foreseen ; and while George was in the hands of his friends, gradually melting into their opinions, and leaning towards their advice, Emma was unconsciously entangling herself in an affair at Mopeham, for which, perhaps, the reader is not altogether prepared.

It was clear that the plan of domesticating George with one agreeable family, which had been suggested by Mr. Gopus, had been to a certain extent successful, but beyond that particular circumstance the change of his position in society did a great deal towards diverting his thoughts into new channels. He was sensitively alive to the force of ridicule, and the incessant fire kept up by his mother, the Duchess and her daughter, upon the school of girls, of which he felt himself conscious Emma was a disciple, had the effect of hindering his speaking of her as he had been formerly accustomed to do, while the varied attractions of the brilliant creature with whom he was now constantly associated, engaged his attention, and occupied his thoughts.

Lady Frances who watched over the process of ridding his mind of an object, the exclusion of which from it was the height of her ambition, did not fail to enlarge upon the unsatisfactoriness of Mr Lovell's letter, which, (after all his doubts respecting its character) her son had shown her : his doing which it must however be admitted was a strong proof of his own improved opinion of its nature and value. A severer blow however awaited him, than the apparent imprudence of Emma's flight with Fanny, and one which certainly threatened to complete the work of which Lady Frances had so ingeniously laid the foundation.

CHAPTER III.

"Against the head which innocence secures,
Insidious malice aims her darts in vain,
Turn'd backwards by the pow'rful breath of heaven."

DR JOHNSON.

FANNY'S recovery at Mopeham was slower than Emma had hoped. We have already seen that after the arrival of the letter, announcing the death of their poor friend Harvey, her grief appeared to take a more settled character ; and the tears, which by an effort she had previously checked, flowed in torrents from her eyes.

To Emma this continued appearance of unmitigated so

ow—in common with every thing connected with Harvey—was extremely painful. She saw in her friend's manner a lepth of interest displayed, whenever the slightest allusion was made to him or his untimely fate, which did not appear at all consonant with the professions she had made before Emma undertook the mediation between them, and which to a certain extent justified, in Emma's mind, the violence which she concluded must have been adopted towards her by her husband; which violence her separation from him was calculated to expose to the world, and in which exposure her father had permitted her to be so painfully and prominently connected.

"My dearest Fanny," said Emma, who was anxiously hoping to be permitted to return to Binford, "you really should struggle with the feelings which you express with regard to poor Charles. Nobody can more deeply regret his loss than myself, and under such circumstances; but separated as you now are from your husband, and intimate as you previously were with Mr Harvey, the devoting your undivided regrets to his loss, cannot fail to give an idea that you are more interested about him than, in point of fact, is quite consistent with your present position in society, and which may, to ill-natured persons, afford the opportunity of saying—or at least a reason for thinking—that your disunion from Mr Harbottle was caused by some discovery on his part of a too favourable opinion of yours towards his friend."

"His friend!" said Fanny. "Oh! such a friend! Heaven knows, and you know, Emma, every feeling of my heart towards Charles Harvey. You know the sacrifice I made to what I considered due to my husband and myself. Surely—surely *you* cannot believe that I permitted any feeling to exist in my mind, which could call for censure?"

"Do not misunderstand me," said Emma, who feared she had wounded her suffering companion. "I know you: it is not in *my* mind that you will suffer by the course you are pursuing. I mean that to those people who will, when you are well enough to see them, visit you here—your aunt herself—and especially to her friend and companion, Miss Budd—your constant recurrence to the one subject—will have—nay, as far as the last person is concerned, I believe has had an appearance the least desirable."

"Emma," said Fanny, "if I could tell you all—if I dare open my heart, you would wonder rather that I am alive, than that I lament so deeply the death of our poor unoffending friend."

"Why, Fanny," said Emma, smiling faintly, "you this

moment told me I *did* know all the secrets of your heart connected with him."

"All but one," said Fanny. "One—one remains untold, and must remain so. But I repeat what I have before said, which, as you appear to think, is inconsistent with what I have said since, that as far as thought, or wish, or act is concerned, my acquaintance with and affection for Charles Harvey were, from first to last, as disinterested and unimpassioned, as your present intimacy with Count Alexis de Montenay."

"The cases are not parallel," said Emma. "The Count delights me, I admit. The natural frankness of his manner, the *naïveté* of his character and conversation, are to me charming; but then —"

"Oh, my dear Emma," said Fanny, "you need not vindicate yourself, or endeavour to extenuate your most justifiable affection for your young friend. I merely mention that as the most immediate instance to which I would compare mine. I meant really neither more nor less than that my regard and affection for Charles were as perfectly divested of every tender feeling, as your friendship and regard for the Count are."

"Then why—why, let me ask you, once for all," said Miss Lovell—"why, in reflecting upon the very important events of the last few days, do your thoughts ever and incessantly cling to the one point. You endure the parting from your husband—you sustain the shock of quitting your home, and of leaving the friends who loved and esteemed you—you are content to endure the malice and slander which the world will doubtlessly endeavour to accumulate upon you—and all these without a sigh; but the moment Charles is mentioned —"

"Oh, do not question me," said Fanny; "in justice trust me—in mercy spare me! I am innocent, but irrevocably wretched. Your father knows all; he alone must know it; and knowing it, he sanctions my conduct by giving me your society. He pledges himself to my aunt, who, like yourself, is in ignorance as to the real cause of my separation from my husband. Never, therefore, press me more, but let me weep. My tears are my only consolation—they are guiltless, but they must have way."

Emma found it was in vain to touch this theme; and the voice of Count Montenay on the staircase, calling on Emma to come and take her accustomed ride, induced her, rather than permit him to see Fanny bathed in tears, to obey his summons, and take leave of her friend, promising not again to recur to the theme of their past conversation, but still advising her, as much as possible, to check a sensibility

which she knew had seriously attracted much of the notice of her aunt and Miss Budd.

Miss Budd was, as we know, of a most rigid turn of mind—long past the age of love or hope, her disposition had curdled, and she was the most inveterate enemy of any thing which savoured of levity of manners, or gaiety of temper. The Count, who was universally a favourite with every body else, was considered by her as far too lively to be proper, and much too presuming to be correct; and his free and easy manner of running about the house, and calling for this lady, and hunting for another, and his dancing and his tricks, which in the exuberance of his spirits he was remarkably fond of exhibiting, kept the antiquated virgin in a state of agitation, from which she hoped to be relieved in a few days, when that volatile visitor was to leave their else quiet, blest retreat.

Emma made no secret of the pleasure she took in the society of the gentle Alexis. They became inseparable companions; and Miss Jarman, whose character was exactly the reverse of her faithful companion's, if she could but have recollected them, would have made numberless jokes at their expense.

In the course of this agreeable intimacy, Emma received, as indeed she had expected, a letter from her father, which perhaps it may be as well to submit to the reader, as giving a slight sketch of the state of Binford.

“ Binford, Oct. 19, 18—.

“ MY DEAR CHILD,

“ Another week has elapsed, and still you are absent—this worries me—not only for that I love your dear society, but because I fear Mrs Harbottle does not sufficiently rally to permit you to quit her—I have not, therefore, written to her to-day, lest I should increase her agitation by recurring to scenes and circumstances, in which she must be so much and naturally interested. You can read to her such parts of this letter as you may conceive she would like to hear, but it is better, I think, to leave to conversation, any remarks upon our town and its inhabitants.

“ Mr Harbottle is in London—he returns, I hear, next week,—it seems that he is mixing in all the gayest—if the most mischievous scenes in town, even if this dull season of the year may be called gay—and is described by a friend of mine, who met him one day last week, apparently reckless in his career; he did not make the slightest reference to Mrs Harbottle, in the conversation he had with my friend, but invited him to the Hall for the hunting season, as he had always done before. Most of the servants have been dis-

charged, and a new domestic administration is formed, of which his old minister, Mr Hollis, is the premier.

"Dale Cottage is deserted; Lady Frances left this suddenly, and went to her son in London, after which they proceeded together to his place in Worcestershire; he wrote me a long and kind letter, to which I returned an answer, giving him all the account I could, of your expedition into the west, but I have not heard since.

"It is curious that you should have met Count de Montenay in a place where I never should have expected to find such a person—your account of him is most favourable—tell him that I quite well remember his late father, and that we were great friends during the time he resided in England; and tell him, that if he feels inclined to visit me, I shall be delighted to receive him for as long a period as he can spare, at the Rectory. It is quite curious to see how connexions come round, and quite romantic that you should have found the son of an old friend of mine, domesticated at the house of the aunt of a friend of yours.

"You must use your own influence, and my entreaty, with Mrs Harbottle, to check the violent grief with which you tell me she continues to be afflicted; melancholy as all the circumstances of the case are, she ought to feel comparatively happy that she has nothing in the world to reproach herself with. The subject is one upon which I most unwillingly touch, and I must entreat of you, when you return to me, to abstain from recurring to it. I make this request, because I perceive in your letters a strong disposition to inquire more particularly into some parts of the affair, and I am bound as solemnly as man can be, to divulge none of them; it will, therefore, spare both of us time and pain if we come to this right understanding now—I know you too well to expect a question upon the subject, after this gentle admonition.

"I have seen nobody since your departure; your aunt is, of course, still with me, and is very much affected, I may almost say distressed, at your absence. I believe, from what she has heard, that Lady Frances takes a very unfavourable view of your expedition, but rely upon your own conscience, your sense of duty to others, and have faith in your father. I hear from the same quarter—a correspondent of her ladyship's—that the party at Severnstoke are extremely gay, and that the Duchess of Malvern and her daughter, Lady Katherine, are there. I suspect Lord Weybridge—kind as the tone and manner of his letter to me is, is not exactly what our friend, George Sheringham, was. His ideas, they say, are princely; the improvements he projects in Worcestershire, magnificent; and the preparations making for his

reception at his town house, in the spring, carrying on upon the most brilliant and extensive scale.

"It is curious to peep through the loopholes of the world, and see the extraordinary changes and mutations of society, and the suddenness with which they are effected. Who, a month since, would not have chosen to be Harbottle, rather than Sheringham? the one, rich beyond care, the other, poor, and in a perilous, though noble profession—and now, we see the one elevated to nobility, and affluence, and consequence, and the other, debased, and degraded, a wanderer from home, from the comforts of which he is cut off by his own misconduct.

"Make my kindest remembrances to your friend; bid her inform herself, and tell her, that in my opinion, the sooner she lets you leave her, the better for herself. New objects, new associations, will relieve her mind, which cannot fail to be filled with her own affairs, so long as she has you constantly with her. My best compliments await Miss Jarman, for whose very kind letter I am much obliged; owing to her having forgotten to put the address on it, it had a circuitous journey to find me, however, it arrived safe, and I am quite happy to find that her niece has made so favourable an impression.

"Again I say, Emma, come—come home the moment you can do so consistently with Mrs Harbottle's health and wishes; and if you choose to volunteer a seat in the carriage, to the Count, and see no impropriety in making the offer, I shall be glad to have him here for a week or ten days, on his way towards London; tell him so, and see if you can prevail upon his excellent hostess to part with him. Once more, farewell; may every blessing await you, and good providence bring you back to the fond heart of your affectionate father,

W. LOVELL."

"I see how it is, my dear Emma," said Fanny, to Miss Lovell, when she had read such parts of this letter to her, as she thought proper for her to know, "your dear, good parent is unhappy and wretched without you—so shall I be—but what are my claims upon you compared to *his*? so, as I cannot have you always with me, I shall insist upon your returning home immediately."

"My father, you see," said Emma, "seems to think that my quitting you, will be a relief to you—you will be forced more completely on your own resources, and you must, whether you like it or not, mix with the more general society of the house. I certainly have a mind, if I go, to engage the Count as my cavalier."

"You don't really mean it," said Fanny, "I never heard of such a scheme."

"My father sanctions it," said Emma, archly; "and when he supports me with his approbation, I never inquire why; I take it for granted that he is anxious to receive a visit from the son of his old friend, and sees no sort of impropriety in our travelling together. I confess I perceive none."

"I have n't a word to say," said Fanny, "it sounds odd, but —"

"Yes, but to us who know the real state of the case —"

"As you say," interrupted Fanny, "in the state of your heart, I don't think there will be any serious danger in it."

Miss Budd, however, was of a very different opinion when the proposition was made. The Count was literally overcome with joy, which he displayed with perhaps more sincerity than civility towards the lady of the house in which he had been so kindly received, when Miss Lovell mentioned her father's wish to see him at Binford. It was so convenient—all the way on his road—and then his dear Miss Lovell, or Emma as he even ventured to call her sometimes, for a companion on the journey; but Miss Budd, although she said nothing, looked vinegar and verjuice, and Miss Jarman, having declared that she could not interfere to prevent so pleasant an excursion, could not let the subject drop without warning Emma to take care of "What do you call the thing on one's left side?"

"Heart, madam," said Miss Budd.

"Yes," said Miss Jarman, "of her heart on the road homeward."

The caution was a work of supererogation. Emma's heart, unfortunately perhaps, was not her's to lose, and although she found Fanny so entirely absorbed with her own affairs, as to leave her no time for the discussion of those of her friend, the very anxiety to hear of George—nay, the desire again to see the place where she first had met him, preyed upon her spirits, and considerably sharpened her readiness to obey the calls of duty, and return to her paternal roof.

A day or two afterwards she again tried her friend upon the subject of their separation, and Fanny, conscious as we have already seen she was, of the uneasiness which Mr Lovell was suffering from the absence of his darling daughter, spoke more calmly and composedly than usual of her return. The terms upon which they separated were, a constant and continuous correspondence, and the condition, that nothing should interfere with the daily communication of their feel-

ngs, hopes, fears, wishes, and intelligence by letters; a few more similar conversations gradually moderated Fanny's dread of losing her, and early on the following Thursday Emma quitted Mopeham, having taken leave of Fanny the night before, without disturbing her from a sleep, which she had procured by means of an opiate, and in which it was held best, by the council of ladies, she should remain, without undergoing the pain of parting from a friend whom she so dearly loved, and whom it was quite uncertain when she should see again.

That Count Montenay accompanied Miss Lovell on her return, is a fact which must not be concealed. They started by day-dawn, so as to reach Binford to a late dinner, the necessity of sleeping on the road being obviated by the absence of the invalid, whom they now left behind them.

It might, perhaps, be thought rather edifying to detail the conversations which passed between the independent "Parson's daughter," and her French friend; but they would scarcely repay the trouble of putting them to paper. The count, roused earlier in the morning than usual, was silent, and even sleepy, and after affecting to be extremely gay and playful for about half an hour, threw himself into a corner of the carriage, and after struggling with his somnolency for some time, went into a sound nap, while Emma, not sorry to be left to her own meditations, after a fortnight or three weeks constant "talk," placed herself in a similar attitude in the other corner, and lulled by the motion of the chariot, and actuated by the force of example, also fell into a most agreeable slumber.

Anxiously, as the day went on, did the excellent Lovell listen for the sound of approaching wheels: six o'clock came—no Emma; seven—no Emma; the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece sounded louder and heavier to him than usual, amid the stillness which he and his sister preserved, in the hopes of hearing the welcome roll of the carriage—at last, the ringing of the bell, the barking of the dogs, and the trampling of horses, announced the approach of his darling child, and at half-past seven the faithful Emma was safely clasped to the heart of her kind and anxious parent.

Lovell was overjoyed to see the count, whom he received with every mark of kindness and hospitality, and Miss Lovell the elder pronounced an opinion to Emma, after dinner, that she had never seen anything so handsome in her life, especially French. The travellers were, however, too much fatigued to "show" to advantage that night; and, therefore, after tea and a brief converse, they retired to the rest, of which they appeared to have so much need.

It turned out, perhaps unluckily, that the squire had turned to the wall on the very day of Emma's departure from Mopeham. As he was aware that she had been companion of his wife's extraordinary flight, it was natural he should seek an interview with her, in order to make some inquiries concerning her, and Lovell, who was particularly anxious that no such interview should take place between Harbottle and his child, was in a sad state of worry lest he should make his appearance at the Rectory in spite of a prohibition which he had received from the rector on the morning of their dialogue with closed doors.

It was just the day of trial—if he did not make the experiment of calling that evening, as he was alone at the Rectory or next morning before his expected company arrived, the probability was that he never would subsequently attempt it. He had written to Fanny at Mopeham, but with an obsolete resolution, which Emma at the time endeavoured to soften, his wife returned the letter unopened, and it was from Lovell alone that she would receive the information that he had made arrangements for the payment to him, in trust for her, of a sum of three thousand five hundred pounds a-year, to be entirely at her own disposal, being, in fact, the same amount as her jointure would have been, had she come a widow.

Lovell was quite convinced that if Harbottle met Emma or conversed with her upon the subject, he would in some way commit himself, or entangle her in the discussion, which, upon every account, it was most desirable should be avoided, and therefore it was that he doubly rejoiced in the presence of the count, who from being (as of course he would during his stay at the Rectory) the companion of Emma's walks and rides, would destroy the chance of a *à tête* between her and the squire.

There were many events near at hand which were little expected by any of the Rectory party, when they laid their heads upon their pillows, on the night of Miss Lovell's turn. As the Rector said, it was wonderful to see the suddenness of human mutations, and with how little warning or preparation the greatest changes are effected. But there was one thing which yet remained unaltered and unchanged and that was the affection of Emma for Lord Weybridge, and the stability of that feeling Lovell was perfectly convinced in less than half an hour after his child's return, and to the truth, he saw it with pain, for he had heard more of the proceedings at Severnstoke than he had thought it necessary to tell his daughter.

Of the servants—admirable chroniclers—who were at Dale Cottage, one of the maids was in the habit of he-

ing regularly from the tall man in the plush garments, who accompanied Lady Frances to London and thence to Worcestershire. There was a *tendre* existing between them, and the hopes and wishes of the servants' hall were therefore intimately interwoven with the proceedings of the superior members of the family. From this maid-servant, the elder Miss Lovell's maid derived much information, and it certainly appeared, upon putting together all the different circumstances which the man in the plushes detailed in his different epistles to the maid in the gingham, that Lord Weybridge had given strong evidence of an intention to make Lady Katharine his wife. The maid who knew enough of her own family concerns to be quite aware of her young mistress's penchant for the noble lord, felt she was doing her old mistress a kindness to open her eyes to the deceitfulness of the peer, which the maid at Dale Cottage most emphatically contrasted with the constancy of her long and liveried correspondent.

From the elder Miss Lovell to her brother, this news was thus as it were subterraneously conveyed, and amongst the different subjects which glanced before her eyes in contemplating the varying and evanescent qualities of mundane matters, the insincerity and heartlessness of George, who had, by every means in his power, evinced his feelings towards Emma, was not one either of the lightest or brightest character. He knew her tenderness—her devotion—her enthusiasm, and he felt sure that such a change in his conduct as the intelligence from Worcestershire seemed to threaten, would go nigh to rob him of the "prop that did sustain his house." It was this fear and apprehension that induced him to encourage the notion of receiving the gay Count Montenay at the Rectory, in the hope that it might serve to divert his child's thoughts from the one engrossing subject, and by dividing her time between his agreeable society, and the graver duties of her ordinary domestic life, save her some of those pangs which those only who have lived for years in lingering suspense, to be at last betrayed, can even guess at. How the reverend gentleman's notable scheme succeeded we shall see in the sequel.

CHAPTER IV.

"She wrote to him a letter
And she sealed it with a ring."
OLD SONG.

THE reader has now seen that a constant communication was kept up between the reduced establishment at Dr Cottage, and those servants whom Lady Frances had with her at her son's; and although her ladyship's woman might not, upon ordinary occasions, choose to hold "gentle converse" with a man in livery, still when an anxiety for information once seizes the female mind, high or low, no smaller sacrifices are made to the one great object, and accordingly Mrs Hall made no scruple of culling intelligence from Robert the footman, touching affairs at Binford.

Through this channel, low and dirty enough to be such to Lady Frances herself condescended to obtain intelligence of her *ci-devant* neighbours, of whom, it must be admitted she was particularly jealous and suspicious in as far as her darling George was concerned; more especially after disclosures unintentionally made to her in the misdirected letter from London, which held firm hold of her mind in opposition to his since apparent indifference; and, therefore, in the hope of picking up a few pearls, her ladyship permitted herself to dabble in the muddy stream of domestic correspondence which "tided" between Binford and Sernstroke.

The imaginative disposition of travellers, in their descriptions of scenes and events, is universally admitted; not certain are the inventive powers of an ingenious letter-writer more especially when his sphere of action is confined, and incidents which have occurred to him, few—he or she in such a case, feels it necessary to enliven the mortal dullness of plain fact with a dash of romance, and reward the reader for poring over a page or two of business, by affording at least an equal portion of more lively and generally a singular matter.

This was the case with the red-elbowed correspondent Robert the footman; she wrote about him and about her to show the interest she took in him, and to maintain interest which she truly believed he felt about her. But in order to entertain him and exhibit the versatility of her

enius, she mixed in her letters much information upon affairs in general," to which, it must however be admitted, he was more particularly induced, by the solicitude of Robert to "tell him something of what's going on," made, as we have ascertained, at the suggestion of Mrs Hall, under the direction of her noble mistress, who kept her eye upon the yet quiet village which she had left, as the skilful geologist watches, with deep anxiety, the place where a volcano exists, but which has ceased, for some time, to exhibit its smoke and flame, in expectation of some violent convulsion. It seemed to her ladyship all mined ground, and we know enough of her to be assured that her dread of a match was unconquerable.

The letter which produced the strongest effect upon her ladyship, and which, as it contained scarce any thing about love, Mrs Hall borrowed of her fellow-servant, under the pretence of wishing to read it alone, but in fact to submit its contents to her lady, we think it may be as well to subjoin, as a specimen of the style and character of a correspondence doomed so materially to affect the destiny and happiness of two personages of such importance as the Right Hon. George Augustus Frederick, Baron Weybridge, and Emma, only daughter of the Rev. William Lovell, M.A., Rector of Binford, and perpetual Curate of Ormersly, and which, as indicative of the beauties of domestic literature, may be found not quite unworthy of notice.

" Dale Cottage.

"DEER ROBERT,—Yours of Sunday cum safe to and,—I am mutch obligged to yew for hall you say, as wel as for Missus Alls civilarity; ples mak my ruspecks too her, and ope she is wel. as for youre aving ad my air put into a lochette, i niver cud ave thot of sich a thing and shall never foggit it.

"Yew ask me for noose, noose here is scace. This place is'nt the same since yew went. The Squirr is at the all, but no sich doins as wen Missis Arbottle was there—all mail creturs now, not a phemale cums nigh the plaice, and the Squirr always inhebrewated. Miss Ollis is gone to toun with her brother Gorge,—they say to be marred to some rich man; but this I think is all fuge, and bleve the Squirr is not so thick with Ollis as eretofore, and as hordered them of. Mister Ollis was very much shagreed at their supuration.

"Miss Hemmer Lovell is returned, but not Missis Arbottle, which has said she shall nivr come back to the Squirr, because thy say he beet her, the nite she went away in the morning—and they say she was so black and blu with the

brewses that she would not take Missus Deffon w^{it} on account she shud not see the whales wich were seen playing round her boddy. Miss Hemmer has no^t aloan. she has brote home a bow wich I hav not see french lord—I here he is very ansum and that Miss Her is very fond of him—her maid you know is as close whacks and theres no gitin nothing out off her, spesh to sich as me—wot she is amungst the ladys I cant but I sed to her yestarday nowing ow fond Miss Hmer is of Lord W. that I was afrayed she was cockget about with this french nobbelman, and she laffed phit to hussell. wech I tuk to meen that eyes right in my co^rtures howsowver Robert i never middles nor mucks wⁱ am sewer is the whysest whey.

“We ad a goose on Micclemus day wich pot me so in^r of yew, because of what yew used to say aboat good h and we drunk hall habsent frends. incloodeng my Lord my Lady Phransis wich i ope is in jood ealth as i ar present. and so is the knary burds and the vergin knyhtar wich as a been malting but as now in eye pheathir.

“So jood bye, send me sun noose of your sylph and yew think it lickly you shall cum here, for I feel quite dilute without you and mop aboat all day for yewer sacsins the Squirr has begun to shoote the Peasants on hestate, there is more cumpunny at the All and s^rgrums and helpers hat the Gorges but I never goes ou the gait, except in the ducks of the heavening praps to Hervins for hany triffling things we wants—the hold ool and i are good frends. and if we ad yewer sockity I shu^u ass apie has the dey is long. Adoo, no more at pres give mi luv and komps to Missus All from

“Yewers truly and fatfully

“MARY GREEN.

Humble as is the style—strange as is the orthograp and uninteresting as the matter of this letter might, by so be supposed to be—to Lady Frances it was every thin M. de Sevigné never wrote any thing half so delightfu her, as Mary Green had written. Emma Lovell return coqueting with a young French nobleman! under he ther's roof—here was an accession of incident for crin^ttion in the eyes of her son—a defection from prudence, from virtue as her ladyship made it out, of which the son's daughter had been guilty, in accompanying a fug wife from the arms and house of her husband, followe by an *affaire du cœur* with a young foreigner carrie under the paternal eye. This was a new charge in the peachment of her honour and propriety, or perhaps, unde

ar circumstances of the case, we might say a new in the indictment. But however delighted her lady- as with so much of the discovery as she had already she was anxious to obtain further information before tually sprang the mine which was not only to annihi- e Lunette, but to blow the citadel itself to atoms, and ertain the name of the new lover—how to do this she ly knew—it was clear that a French title was not like- ‘come to hand” at all in its proper form through the m of such a “speller and putter-together” as Mary ; and how else could she get at the intelligence she d without committing herself to somebody in Binford, etraying an interest in the Lovells, which she was anxious nobody in the world should imagine her to feel? ladyship yet had one resource. There was one per- whom she could write, in his professional character, ould be so highly flattered by her application for ad- made from under the aristocratic roof of Severnstoke, luzzled by her condescension, and blinded by his own ; he would, upon a very slight provocation, be as com- ative as she could wish. This was Popjoy, he of the ’s head—the smart, smug, neat and dapper apothecary, assistant her ladyship had proposed as a suitable for Emma, and to whom she could, as if accidentally, in order to draw him out upon the subject of the Par- e politics, and so, as she believed, secure the informa- which she now so ardently desired.

She knew George to be constitutionally sensitive with l to the deceptions of women. She had already brought to a very favourable state of mind for her further pur- by devoting herself and enlisting into the cause of asion, and as has already been said of ridicule, the ess and her beautiful daughter—George was already than half convinced of the impropriety of Emma’s ct, and that half conviction led him back to a recon- tion of her former conduct with respect to Harvey, made him doubt the sincerity of Mrs Harbottle’s esti- of Emma’s affection for himself—and then he naturally h asked himself how he had obtained any assurance of Lovell’s regard and esteem, and as naturally answered lf through the medium of a third person, a lady who t immediately after the conversation which he had her, upon this vital subject, had eloped from her hus- and made this very Miss Lovell the partner of her

ly Frances had watched him during his residence at nstoke—there had been various changes of visitors— duchess and her daughter remaining however fixtures—

she saw that George had made no new confidences—that although he would occasionally seem dull his dullness lasted but a short time. He mixed willingly in all the amusements of the day and all the entertainments of the evening, and she saw that Lady Katharine had succeeded in attracting and even fixing his attentions and regards; they tacitly fell into each others society, joined in the same pursuits, and, in short, at the end of the month, the stay at Severnstoke, which was originally only to have occupied a fortnight, was again lengthened at George's own proposal, and Lady Frances felt sure that, before the next fortnight ended, matters would take the turn she so much desired, and that the Morning Post would speedily have to announce the approaching nuptials of Lord Weybridge and the beautiful Lady Katharine Hargrave, third daughter of her Grace the Duchess of Malvern.

But still with this conviction on her mind, Lady Frances thought the *denouement* of the French Count would at once produce the crisis she was so anxiously anticipating—that her son would turn suddenly round from the disclosure of the falsehood and frivolity of the sly and silent Emma, and make an instant declaration to the splendid creature who had been now so long domesticated with him, and who bore in her countenance all the beauty for which her illustrious family had been so long distinguished, and in her mind all that, which Lady Frances held to be essential in the world, and of which it was quite clear the Parson's daughter possessed not one atom.

Thus excited and thus resolved, the Lady Frances Sheringham, after having condescended to read Miss Green, her housemaid's letter, written in confidence to Mr Robert Long, her ladyship's footman (that confidence having been violated at her ladyship's own suggestion by her ladyship's own woman Mrs Hall), sat down to address herself to her own apothecary at Binford. Perhaps the reader who is offered the perusal of her ladyship's epistle, without making any such sacrifice as those which her ladyship made in order to obtain a sight of Miss Green's, had better see what her ladyship said to the Binford Paracelsus.

“ *Severnstoke House, Oct. 1830.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I do not know how it is, but the camphor julep which I get here is totally different from that which you were good enough to send me when I was at Binford: somehow the camphor curdles in the liquid, and is extremely unpleasant to my palate. I am going I know to be very troublesome, but if you could do me the favour to make me up two or three good-sized bottles, and have them packed

carefully, I should feel extremely obliged. Perhaps you would take the trouble to let some of your people carry them to the cottage, and the servants there will forward them without any farther inconvenience to you. Perhaps the difference in the julep is all imaginary, and occurs only from the sort of feeling we naturally have towards any medicine from which we have derived benefit in particular time, and from particular persons. I am sure I have every reason to be grateful for your professional care of me.

"I hope Mrs Popjoy, and your very nice daughter are quite well. I expect very soon to hear of her marriage. I am sure you will not keep her to yourselves long. I know nothing of Binford politics here, and any thing you can tell me will be interesting, for I quite love the neighbourhood.

"I was very sorry to hear that there seems no chance of a reconciliation between Mr and Mrs Harbottle. They were excellent people, and I never felt greater regret than at their unfortunate separation. I conclude dear Miss Lovell is returned to her amiable father. I hope you did not mention to your young gentleman, I forget his name, what I hinted about a match in that quarter—I am sure she would be a treasure to any deserving husband.

"With many apologies for the trouble, and begging you to make my compliments to your lady and Miss Popjoy,

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Your obedient humble Servant,

"FRANCES SHERINGHAM."

"What!" said Lord Weybridge, who happened to see the direction of this unsophisticated letter, "are you in correspondence with our village apothecary?"

"Professionally," said Lady Frances.

"Ah, dear Binford," muttered the baron, as his pen traced the word on the envelope, "I could have been happy enough there."

"Where is Katharine?" said Lady Frances, who heard this soliloquy.

"Oh!" said Lord Weybridge, "I am going to ride with her almost directly. I have written to ask my old Doctor here."

"I'm glad of it," said Lady Frances,—which she was not.

"I don't know whether he will come," said his lordship. "He is an odd fellow—but he is an excellent fellow, and I want to talk to him."

Lady Frances did not half like this apparent desire for an adviser, for she guessed that something important was in her son's mind, and believing it to be the doubt whether he

should make his offer to Lady Katharine, she did not fancy MacGopus quite the sort of person to admire the high-bred woman of fashion and feared lest he should eulogize as a contrast to the decided nonchalance of her polished manners, the retiring modesty of Miss Lovell, which he had often heard praised, and of which, from what he had heard, until somebody agreed with him, he professed himself the decided admirer.

To oppose his visit would be destructive to her plan of acceding to all Lord Weybridge's present propositions, and making the *séjour* at Severnstoke as agreeable to him as possible. She, therefore, appeared cordially to acquiesce in the invitation, satisfying herself by a determination, first to discover the history of Emma and her new gallant, and then to ensure the Doctor's most violent opposition to her by vindicating her conduct in his presence, which she now knew enough of him to know would produce the effect she most desired, from the lips of the man to whom her son looked up with respect and veneration in matters of discretion and judgment. Thus, while Lord Weybridge was applying to one medical friend for counsel upon some important question, which he was revolving in his mind, his mother was consulting another of the faculty upon a point of equal importance to her, and which, in all probability might turn out to be identically the same.

The real truth appears to have been, that George began to feel himself daily getting more and more entangled in the web which his mother, and the duchess, and her daughter, had been weaving for him. Lady Frances had succeeded in bringing him to feel the impropriety of Emma's conduct, and, as has been just mentioned, he had no proof direct, no testimony coming from her, either of her affection for him, or vindictory of the extraordinary step she had taken. Mr Lovell's letter, in answer to the one he had written, was any thing but satisfactory; yet with all these accumulating doubts, he felt himself pledged to her, although he also felt that the pledge had been given to a person under very different circumstances, at the time, to those in which she was now placed.

George was not insensible to the attractions of Lady Katharine—nor was he blind to the course he was pursuing. That love formed no part of the inclination he felt for the duchess's daughter, was plain, for his heart still lingered at the Parsonage, but he was conscious that with all the admiration he felt for his fair visitor, the constant association, the anxiety of both mothers for the match, the connexion, merits, and charms of the young lady herself, nothing was required but finally to cut all connexion with Miss Lovell

to bring the other matter to an immediate conclusion. He felt that he could love as he had loved Emma but his life—were he sure of her fidelity, and convinced of the propriety of her conduct, he would not hesitate to make any and every sacrifice to redeem the pledge he had given her—but upon that point his doubts had been excited, his fears awakened, and therefore it was, he wished to consult Mentor. What a delicate crisis was now approaching and how curious that, at such a moment, when a balance might turn the scale, Lady Frances should have been moved, by dint of her surprising activity, fresh intelligence which must, if confirmed agreeably to her anticipations, make the scale kick the beam.

Having ascertained that MacGopus was invited, it became Lady Frances's first duty to put the duchess and the lady *au fait* as to the character of that worthy person, and accordingly all his merits were, in the first instance, displayed to their knowledge, and then came the successive exhibition of his defects, and the whole history of his peculiar disposition to contradict; to all of which her ladyship thought it necessary to allude, lest her grace and her ladyship's grace with her, should suddenly take alarm at the abruptness of the new visiter and shorten their stay at Stoke, a course of proceeding which would have been particularly disagreeable to her ladyship.

The party, after various fluctuations, was again reduced to themselves, with occasional additions, at dinner, of one of the dependents of the house, in the shape of the parson's attorney, the rector, whose living was in my lord's gift, and the medical gentleman, with whom Lord Weymouth was perfectly certain the Doctor would have some disagreement the very first hour they met, and who was frequently to be invited the next three days, in order that he might not expect an invitation for the next fortnight.

Everything was arranged altogether as if things were drawing to a close, so that although it would be impossible for a marriage to take place in the family for some considerable time, yet as if the arrangements for such a consummation were to be made speedily to be made, and rendered irrevocable.

CHAPTER V.

"I would be drunk ————
To stupify the sense of inward torment."

LEE.

IF the reader should be at all desirous of knowing how things were proceeding at Mopeham, the readiest way of satisfying his curiosity will be, to permit him the same sort of inspection of the last letter which Emma Lovell had received from Fanny, as he has already been allowed in the cases of Mary Green and Lady Frances Sheringham.

"Mopeham, Oct. 9th, 1830.

"MY DEAR EMMA,

"Every day increases my regret at your absence. In vain I try to rally—in vain endeavour to divert my thoughts from the horrors of my own position. I have received a letter from my husband, which is in character, both contrite and affectionate; he seems to have entirely abandoned those suspicions of my levity and impropriety of conduct which he so cruelly expressed before our friends and visitors; and yet if he has so satisfied himself, I can in no degree understand how he yet exists. He solicits my return to Binford, promises entire oblivion of all that has passed, and tells me, that he has discarded some of those of his establishment who could not fail to be odious to me, and that even his principal favourite, Hollis, is on the eve of departure.

"I have answered his letter, and have written to your father, enclosing a copy of that answer. I have firmly and strenuously refused to listen to any suggestion as to my return to Binford Hall, or to any farther association with him. Indeed, I can hardly fancy how he could have brought himself to make the request. His feelings must be more extraordinary than even I imagined, as, if ever the day comes when I may speak out, you will, I am sure, agree with me in thinking.

"At the present moment, considering how I am placed, and considering how happily I should be situated with regard to yourself, if I returned, independently of the resumption of my position in the house of my husband, I have no doubt that your first impression will be unfavourable to the firmness of my resolution not to go back. But when I repeat

that it is impossible, all comment upon the course I adopted, and still persist in, may be spared me. I am content to remain here, forgotten by the world, I hope, and solace and consolation for what is past, in pursuits, to which, perhaps, I had before devoted too small a portion of me, and to the task of self-correction and humiliation, in which I stand so much in need.

Placed by my husband's pecuniary liberality in comparative affluence, I am endeavouring to profit by the bright example you have set me. I have already planned a school, have raised a subscription upon your system, for furnishing the neighbouring poor with comforts for the approaching winter, and have found myself encouraged and supported in efforts by our clergyman here, who seems, in his degree, to value all the virtues and merits of your excellent father, in mine am endeavouring to make myself a worthy follower of his daughter.

My poor aunt, whose decreasing memory ceases to be as such as, if we had been in our usual spirits when we lived here, we should have been inclined to consider it, grows more and more oblivious every day; and Miss Budd, who sees in me a rival near the throne, is more cross and perturbed than ever. She is quite safe as far as I am concerned, for I have no desire to influence my poor aunt one way or the other, although it must be confessed, her preference for her niece in preference to her "eligible companion," is nothing so very marvellous, if we could but make her think so.

So you have kept our young friend at the Rectory till now. It surprises me, knowing what the object of his journey hither was: but, when you tell me he will probably remain with you till Christmas, I am strangely puzzled. He certainly is a very captivating person, and we miss him here, sorely. Even Miss Budd smiled upon him. Pray remember me kindly to him, and tell him, I expect he will not forget his promise of writing to me.

My health, dear Emma, keeps pace, I regret to say, with my spirits. Indeed, the intimate connexion of our mental and bodily affections I have long been aware of; for those days of what were called my gaiety and happiness, and illnesses of which I so often complained, were always occasioned by mental sufferings, which then it would have been undutiful, and now, would be useless to express. I have, perhaps, enjoyed some bright, sunny hours, and none so bright and sunny than those which I have passed since I knew you. But they are all outweighed and obliterated by occurrences, such as, perhaps, few women ever were

mixed up with, and none, in my position in society, could ever have anticipated.

"I see by the newspaper—which we get here once a week, three or days old—that Lord Weybridge is still entertaining a party at Severnstoke. Pray tell me, have you heard nothing from him? Possessed, as you are, of the secret of his heart, you need apprehend no change in such a mind and character as his. Rely upon it, Lady Frances will use every endeavour in her power to keep him from Binford; and, from the provoking circumstance of your absence the day he came to visit you, and when I saw him, the devoted, ardent lover, ready to throw himself at your feet, the link was broken, which you cannot attempt at present to re-unite; for it appears to me to be as impossible for your father to recommence a correspondence with him, as it would be for you to evince any desire of renewing your acquaintance.

"These unfortunate circumstances I feel most deeply, because I cannot be blind to the mischief I have unconsciously done to your brightest prospects. Years of sorrow and repentance will not free my mind from this conviction, nor relieve me from the misery I suffer in consequence. But of this I am sure, that whatever worldly evil may assail you or cross you in your path to happiness, your piety, your virtue, and your excellence in every moral duty, must eventually triumph, and secure you the enjoyment of every temporal comfort.

"My aunt desires to send her affectionate regards to you, and her love to the Count, whom, when she can recollect his name, she calls *dear* Alexis. Miss Budd is half scandalized at such terms of affection, however, even *she* transmits her best remembrances. So you see, having carried off our general favourite, you must content yourself to be the channel of our general and united regards. Tell your dear, good father, that when it is quite convenient, I should like to hear from him, and have his opinion about my answer to Mr Harbottle. Tell him the letter required an immediate reply, and being quite assured beforehand of his acquiescence in my views, I ventured to send the answer without consulting him. Indeed, from circumstances which I need not repeat, I am not quite sure that the letter was not written and addressed to me here, in order to ascertain whether I was not somewhere else: this, in my mind, added to the importance of answering by return.

"Write, my dear Emma, for you are better able to do so than I am. I grow so unaccountably weak—I rally—I exercise faith and hope, and, in some small degree, charity; I struggle with my fate and my feelings, and put my trust in other and better things than those of this world. But I have a

sad pain on my heart, which weighs me down, and which I cannot overcome. Farewell, dear Emma, and believe me affectionately your's,

“FRANCES HARBOTTLE.”

“P. S.—I wish—I know you will forgive me—I wish you could find out for me where our poor friend Charles Harvey was buried. All we heard was the name of the house to which his body was first carried after it had been found. I conclude his remains were removed to his own home. It would be a melancholy satisfaction to me to know this. Perhaps your father can tell: ask him *from me*. Emma, adieu!”

“So!” thought Emma, “her mind still lingers there; her heart still yearns for news of him, even though he be dead. There is nothing in her letter which my father may not see. She bids me ask this last, yet leading question:—he shall read it.”

Lovell did read it, and Emma gazed on his fine, expressive countenance with intense anxiety as his eyes followed each line. Accustomed to watch and comprehend each turn of his features, she looked intently till he came to the post-script: she saw no change—no anger—no surprise—no strong emotion as he read it. On the contrary, a benign smile of pity and affection played on his lips, and all he uttered was, “poor soul!”

Lovell was able to give her the desired information, and directed Emma to tell her, that the remains of the unfortunate Harvey, after having been, in the first instance, carried to Mr Mordaunt's, were eventually removed to the church of the parish in which his property was situated, (and which, indeed, comprised nearly the whole of it,) and there interred; and that his uncle, who succeeded to his fortune, had just taken up his abode in the house on the estate, where he proposed to establish his permanent residence.

“Count,” said Lovell—who, as it may be remembered, had persuaded this sprig of French nobility to remain at the Parsonage for a much longer time than he had originally intended—“how do you reconcile it to yourself to make so many conquests? Why, here are the united regards of a lady separated from her husband, and two entirely single ladies into the bargain,—all in one letter.”

“They are very good,” said the count, smiling, and dashing away his curling locks of raven black hair from his high, strong forehead; “you must send my love back to them, Miss Emma.”

“You may depend upon it I will, Alexis,” said Miss Lo-

vell; "but I cannot help thinking, that you will be spoiled in England."

"Trust me," said the count, in that sort of broken English which is so extremely winning. "It shall take a great deal to spoil me."

"Extremely modest," said Emma, "some of us think that enough has already been done, and done too, with no little success."

"Ah! Miss Emma!" said the count, "you are so droll—but I don't mind—I know you don't really think so."

How far the count's assertion might be borne out by his experience in such matters, it does not become us to determine, certain it was that Emma never seemed half so happy as in his society, and Lovell himself who saw—for who could be blind to it—the pleasure his daughter received in the company of her gay and amiable visitor, was quite restless and uneasy if the count was absent for any length of time; in fact it seemed as if he were completely domesticated at the Parsonage, and the elderly ladies in the Paragon, began to talk and wonder what it could mean, and why he staid—and why he did not go—wonderments of which they were not likely to be speedily relieved, as the Parsonage was one of the houses in the parish, into which the members of the "tea and toast" society of Binford, put not their feet.

The reader must have already perceived that with all the shrinking delicacy and diffidence of the blue-eyed Emma Lovell, the mind that was enshrined within that delicate casement was vigorous and independent—resolute and unbending—conscious of the rectitude of her intentions, strong in the purity of her conscience, and implicit in her obedience to her father, she needed only to be confirmed in the impulse of her feelings by his sanction to defy all the envy, the calumny and the uncharitableness of the world. In the case of Harvey and Fanny—satisfied herself at the moment of the excellence of her friend, and feelingly alive to the delicacy and difficulty of her situation, she had stepped from the quiet sphere of her good deeds into a position most arduous for one so young and so inexperienced. She confided in the propriety of her own motives—she spoke the plain language of truth, and she triumphed.

Then when the blow fell, which after all divided Fanny for whom she had already made this incipient sacrifice, from her husband, another call was made upon her fortitude and friendship—this was a step too deciding and too decisive to take without advice—she therefore sought it of her father—his sanction given was never questioned, and the lovely

girl set forth upon a pilgrimage to rescue and support her friend.

The last case—that of Count Alexis Montenay—other young women might have been squeamish, and have affected a false delicacy in making the long journey homeward alone with a young French nobleman, without either chaperon or bodkin to play propriety in the carriage—not so Emma, her father had with pleasure recognized in the count, the son of an old and early acquaintance, and solicited him to make a visit to the Rectory—the course was obvious—indeed so obvious that Mr Lovell himself suggested that the count should be his daughter's companion. Emma took no more thought about it, but assumed her seat in the carriage with as much confidence in herself, and as little care for the world's malice as if she had been going on a similar journey with her aunt Lovell, or her starched friend Miss Budd.

But with all this firmness and independence, her heart was gentle, tender, and kind; and however anomalous it may sound, convinced as the reader must be of her devotion to George Sheringham, the only solace she found in her sorrows on his account, she received in the society of the Count; and herein she only displayed another proof of the admirable regulation of her mind and passions. In every action of her life, she was more familiar with the Count Alexis, than she had ever been with George. Alexis with all his national gallantry would kiss her hand—sit by her side for hours—and yet she felt neither diffidence nor difficulty in the enjoyment of his conversation. She was conscious that her heart was in other keeping, and was perfectly confident that however much she might admire the *naïveté* and vivacity of her young French friend, she was in no danger of being inspired by a sentiment likely, in the slightest degree, to endanger her sincerity or weaken her constancy.

There *are* people who would act unwisely thus to tamper with their passions and feelings, and amongst the number we should class Lord Weybridge himself; but there was a constitutional firmness and integrity in Emma, which rendered it a matter of impossibility to change or deteriorate the character of an attachment formed, as her's had been for George Sheringham.

At the Hall, the proceedings were very much what Miss Mary Green, in the "viridity of her intellect" described them. The people by whom Harbottle was surrounded had more of fiends than friends about them, and the orgies which had been before in some degree modified by the presence of his lovely wife, were now continued throughout the night, and drunkenness, incessant and unmitigated, reigned throughout the mansion. As for Harbottle himself, he re-

maintained sometimes for two or three days together in a state of insensibility, either sullenly silent, or raving incoherently, indeed the only sign of life or intellect he gave one morning, after about eleven hours sitting, was displayed when two or three of his servants endeavoured to lift him from the floor of the dining-room to carry him to bed—Raising himself on his arm, upon this memorable occasion, he stammered out, “stand off—stand off, I say, or I’ll lodge an information against you at the Excise Office—I have swallowed more than a dozen of wine—you must not move me without a *permit*.”

This lucid interval was followed by shrieks and shouts most sonorous and inharmonious, and he was lifted into his truckle bed in the little room adjoining the library—for he had never set foot in his own room after Fanny’s departure, nor even gone up the staircase which led towards it—and there he relapsed into the state of unconsciousness, in which he slumbered away the greatest part of his now wretched existence.

One effect had been produced upon his character, which threatened to leave him very shortly shorn even of the hangings-on, who literally lived upon him, and for what they could get out of him. His temper which till now had been variable, and at times boisterous, was formerly enlivened by occasional gleams of bright sunshine, and he was for hours together, good-humoured and gay. Now, all this had turned to moroseness when serious, and ill nature when excited. The coarsest negatives couched in the coarsest language were his ordinary replies to the observations of his boon companions, and his conversation was made up of oaths and imprecations, adopted to give greater force to the expression of his hatred and contempt for every thing on the face of the earth except himself.

Amongst all the objects of his detestation, Hollis had become to him the most odious. He could not endure the sight of him, yet he did not know how to part with him. The consequence was, that the menial, feeling conscious of his master’s divided power and inclination, became rather his opponent in discussion, than his subordinate in execution, and in short the house, neglected in all its ornamental parts, deserted by every body who could adorn or dignify it, became little else than a rendezvous for all the neighbouring sportsmen without regard either to rank or character. Whether Harbottle were there or not, in or out, visible or invisible, the same continual routine of jest and ribaldry went on, until at last the Squire became severely ill, and Hollis, in order to rid himself and his fellows of the trouble of waiting on a crowd of their equals, declared his master to be danger-

usly indisposed, and announced a discontinuance at least or the present of the unlimited licentiousness which had been for many days going on. The combined avowal of the Squire's illness, and the absence of "the meat and drink," answered the purpose effectually, and the next day Binford Hall was as dark and as decent as Mopeham House.

What might have been the imprecations bestowed by the Squire upon the head of Hollis, for the "bulletin" which he had thought proper to issue without authority, had he been well enough to rise the next day, it is impossible to guess. The truth is, that Mr Harbottle was really and truly too seriously indisposed to quit his bed, and Hollis having administered all the usual remedies upon such occasions, and finding his "poor" master slower in recovering than usual, deemed it necessary to send for Mr Popjoy to visit the Hall; this measure, he took about five o'clock in the afternoon, the necessity for which, in his own mind, may be calculated by the fact, that as soon as it was dark, the tilted cart belonging to the establishment was seen leaving the park-gates richly stored with well piled hampers, (whether full or not, it does not become the historian to surmise,) together with divers and sundry other articles "unknown to deponent," all of which were safely deposited in the London wagon the same night, and despatched at the rate of three miles an hour to the metropolis, directed to the exemplary son of the worthy house-steward and butler, whose departure for town has previously been noticed by Miss Mary Green.

The call upon Popjoy to visit the Squire came very opportunely, for according to the arrangement of the Binford post, it would just give him an opportunity, in his reply to the letter which we happen to know he had received from Lady Frances, to convey to her ladyship some intelligence with respect to his patient's health; and as has been observed in an earlier page, nothing is so delightful to a correspondent from a dull place, as a bit of something local, which may for a moment excite or interest a friend.

Upon the apothecary's return from the Hall, he therefore concluded his epistle to her ladyship, and his red and white young gentleman having made a proper admixture of camphorated alcohol and aqua pura, according to her ladyship's directions, the bottles were packed and the letter sealed, in which we shall take leave *en passant* to peep.

"Binford, Oct. 13, 1830.

"MY LADY,—I have had the honour to receive your ladyship's letter of the 10th, and have made up three pint bottles of the camphor julep, such I had the pleasure to furnish your

ladyship with at Dale Cottage, and hope the same will be found to answer accordingly. I have much to thank your ladyship, for your ladyship's kind recollection of Mrs P. She begs to be remembered to your ladyship, as does my daughter, to whom we did not venture to exhibit your ladyship's letter, for fear of turning her poor little head.

"I am sorry to say that I have been sent for to-day to Mr Harbottle, who is in a very bad way I fear; he is in a violent fever, and in some degree delirious, the effects of constant intoxication, under which, I am told by the servants, he has been labouring now for two or three days incessantly. I have not ventured to bleed him in his present state of unconsciousness, because I am no advocate for phlebotomy, but I shall see him again this evening, and if he is not better, shall certainly call in Dr Bogie, who is our nearest physician.

"Mr Lovell is pretty well in health. Miss Emma has returned home, and they have a young French nobleman staying with them, Count Alexis Montenay, who seems a very particular favourite with Miss Lovell and her father. He stops, I hear, until Christmas. He is, however, a great resource to Miss Lovell, whose constant companion he is; for I am sorry to say, since her journey with Mrs Harbottle, at the time of her elopement, the *ladies* here are not quite so attentive to her as they ought to be.

"I hope your ladyship will forward me any further commands, and I shall always be too proud to obey them on the instant. Your servants here are in good health, except the housemaid, Mary Green, who had a smartish bilious attack on the 30th of last month, but which discipline and abstinence soon set to rights.

"I have the honour, my Lady, to remain your Ladyship's most obedient, faithful, humble servant,

"OLINTHUS POPJOY."

By the perusal of this letter—how acceptable to Lady Frances who can describe—we are put into possession of several interesting facts relative to the internal economy of Binford—the state of the Squire's health—and of the popular opinion of the elderly ladies with regard to Emma's flight—the apothecary's surmises about the French count—and, above all, the indigestion of Mary Green, on the morning after the day when, like Queen Elizabeth, she had eaten goose, and thought of her sweetheart.

Who can doubt the efficacy of this double-edged sword in the hands of Lady Frances against the suffering martyr, Emma? Not only the view that Lady Frances had taken of her journey—but the view that all the old ladies took of it—

not only the inuendo of a French count—but the actual fact of his residence at the Parsonage, and his name—Alexis Montenay—and all this, and the bulletin from the Hall, for the value of a little condescension, and three pints of cambror julep.

The effects of this communication remain to be exhibited in the sequel; suffice it to say, that the letter, carefully sealed and delicately deposited in the packing-case, in company with the three bottles, quitted Binford at eight o'clock in the evening, and at half past eight the gentle apothecary again proceeded to the Squire's bed side, where he seated himself, and remained unnoticed by his much damaged patient, until ten minutes past nine; when, opening his eyes, the sick man swore a tremendous oath at the village Galen, and having thrown one of the pillows at his head, turned himself round again to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

"My bane and antidote are both before me."

ADDISON.

"EXACTLY the reverse, my lady," said MacGopus, who had arrived at Severnstoke just in time for dinner, and was now sitting after it, in the yellow drawing-room, debating a question with the Duchess and her daughter; Lord Weybridge being occupied in a distant corner writing letters.

"Surely, my dear sir," said the Duchess, "you must agree with Katharine that equal matches are more likely to produce happiness than those in which there exists a great disparity of rank and fortune between the husband and wife."

"Quite the contrary, my lady," replied the Doctor. "If a rich man marries a poor woman, she feels grateful as well as affectionate, and *vice versa*."

"Well now," said Lady Katharine—who being extremely amused by the quaintness and oddity of the Doctor's manner, determined to have her full share of the conversation—"when we were at St Leonard's, last year —"

"Stop, my lady," interrupted MacGopus—"where's St Leonard's?"

"Oh, the sea watering-place, close to Hastings;" said her ladyship. "When —"

"Stay now—I beg pardon—" said the Doctor, "that must be near the spot where William the Conqueror landed."

"Exactly. Well, when we were at St Leonard's last season?"

"Was it full, my lady, when you were there?" asked MacGopus.

Lady Katharine, unused to such strange interruptions, stopped for an instant—and then looked at her mother.

"Why don't you answer, Katharine?" said her Grace.

"Oh," cried Lord Weybridge, from his corner, "Lady Katharine is not used to my old doctor yet. You won't get him out of St Leonard's this side midnight, if you indulge him."

"Mind your letter, my Lord," said MacGopus. "Leave her ladyship alone. Well, my Lady—"

"Upon my word I have entirely forgotten what I was going to say," said her ladyship.

"Something illustrative of the question concerning unequal marriages," said the Doctor, "which was to refute my decision."

What the anecdote illustrative of the question concerning unequal marriages might have been, the assembled party were not at that period destined to hear; for Lady Frances, who had quitted the room a short time before, on a summons brought to her by a servant, returned full of exulting smiles, and, with an expression of triumph on her countenance, threw the newly-received letter of Popjoy (in the reading of which we have taken the liberty of anticipating her) upon the table before George, with an air of decision and self-gratulation, which it would be vain to attempt to describe.

George ran his eyes along the lines, and Lady Frances watched the expression of his countenance as they followed the words of the Binford apothecary. A smile played on his lips at one moment, and then he paused:—"I am sorry to hear of Harbottle's illness;" said his Lordship, "it is a result which one might have anticipated. He might probably have been saved, if your communicative correspondent had been able to bleed him at the moment."

"Well—read on," said Lady Frances.

Lord Weybridge obeyed. He came to the paragraph about the Lovells—his colour changed—his lip quivered—symptoms which would have been most unpleasant to her ladyship, had she not felt assured that the intelligence which followed would cure the disorder altogether. George concluded so much of the epistle as concerned the family; and, throwing it upon the table with an air of indifference and firmness, said—"What a scandalous place a country town is. I think these old women, affecting to look shy upon a

girl for conduct sanctioned by her father, and that father such a man as Lovell, is rather too much of a joke."

"What do you think of the history of the Count?" said Lady Frances.

"Why, that he is some old friend of Lovell's on a visit at the Parsonage, to whom Emma, in the plenitude of her good nature and good breeding, thinks it right to be extremely civil."

"Surely," said Lady Frances, "my dear George, you have not read the letter attentively. The words are, 'young French nobleman.'"

"Aye, aye," said Lord Weybridge, who was determined not to be annoyed—"but estimates of age are always comparative. Popjoy, at sixty, fancies any thing at fifty juvenile, just as a veteran of eighty, laments the untimely death of his friend at ninety-two, as an awful and unseasonable visitation. Duchess, do you, amongst the cloud of foreigners who migrate hither in the season like herrings and woodcocks, know any thing of a Count—what do you call him, Lady Frances?"

"Alexis Montenay," said or rather read her ladyship.

"Montenay?" said her Grace—"No. What was that man's name with the mustachios we met at the Howards, Katharine?"

"I quite forget," said Lady Katharine, "but certainly not Montenay; and yet I *do* think I have heard the name. If you are very much interested, Lord Weybridge, I will write to-morrow to Lady Winterbourne, who has a list of the arrivals regularly furnished from the Foreign Office, and keeps a register of their names during the season."

"Oh, I don't think," said Lady Frances, "George cares much about it."

"I think he does," said MacGopus, taking a pinch of snuff, and looking excessively cunning; for doing which Lady Frances could have killed him.

"Where did you hear of this 'outlandish person?'" said Lady Katharine.

"From Binford," replied Lady Frances.

"What's Binford, my Lady?" said MacGopus.

"Don't answer him, my dear mother," said Lord Weybridge. "He knows as well as you do. I have told him at least a hundred times, and it is all affectation. He has heard that the majority of clever people in the world are short-sighted, and so he fancies that a short memory is a proof of great wit."

"I only asked what Binford was," said MacGopus, neither disturbed by his noble friend's raillery, or diverted from his purpose.

"Why," said Lady Katharine, "it is the place where Lady Frances lives, when she is at home."

"Ah!" said MacGopus, "that's the place where the Parson lives who has the daughter."

"Have you ever seen the Parson's daughter?" said the Duchess.

"No, ma'am," replied MacGopus; "but I have heard a great deal about her."

"I think you will not hear much more," said Lady Frances, who looked at the Doctor as if she could have eaten him alive.

"I really don't see," said Lord Weybridge, "why Miss Lovell is to be an interdicted subject. She has shown her independence by accompanying a lady in her flight from a husband, and is now exercising her taste by flirting with a young French nobleman; whereupon the elderly ladies of Binford, to whose taste and judgment my dear mother was not always in the habit of deferring when they were her neighbours, think it prudent and wise to look cool upon her."

"And with good reason, too," said MacGopus; "why did she go scampering over the country with a runaway?"

"Ah! why indeed;" said Lady Frances, who was convinced she had got the Doctor in the right key to serve her purpose—"what excuse can be made for that?"

"Friendship, my lady," replied MacGopus, "which is an excuse for many things. She has got a father, hasn't she?"

"She has," said George; arousing himself to make the answer, from a reverie, the appearance of which, was any thing but agreeable to his lady mother.

"Well then, surely," said MacGopus, "if he—a good man—and a prudent man—and a wise man—permitted his child to make the excursion, there can't be much harm in it."

Here Lady Frances, who was dying to change the conversation which she had herself somewhat incautiously started, proposed music, *écarté*, chess, and fifty minor diversions, and Lady Katharine good-naturedly seated herself at the pianoforte, and played some of the last new quadrilles; but George, instead of following her to the instrument, as usual, took MacGopus aside, and muttered to him in one of the windows of the next drawing-room; and Lady Frances went and sat by the Duchess, to endeavour to talk down the unfortunate allusion which had been made to Emma, during which conversation, Lady Katharine blundered over Auber, unconscious of what she was about, and full of the belief that she was not so near the heart or coro-

net of their noble host as she had, during the last week, fancied herself.

It was just at this period—perhaps at the very moment of which we are now treating—that the two mothers began to take counsel, and agree that the crisis had arrived—that the particular turn in the affair upon which both their hearts was fixed was at hand—and that it became a duty on the part of the Duchess to come to some explanation with Lord Weybridge on the subject of his intentions towards her daughter. This feeling on the part of her Grace, Lady Frances endeavoured by every means in her power to strengthen. She was assured, by her son's manner, that his interest in Emma Lovell was in no degree decreased; but she was equally convinced, judging by the same criterion, that his faith in her was shaken—Her conduct subsequent to the very unsatisfactory letter of her father, in which he had evidently condescended to equivocate, was any thing but gratifying: and now this account of her new attachment, or flirtation, or whatever it was, coupled with the description of the impression which her imprudence had made in the immediate neighbourhood, her ladyship was perfectly convinced would prove a powerful blow to his personal vanity, or perhaps as it might be considered, to his pride and delicacy.

Feeling conscious, as he did, that he had, in fact, and to all intents and purposes, made Emma an offer of his heart and hand through the medium of her friend—who, under all the circumstances, could neither have concealed nor misrepresented the fact—he certainly was staggered by the intelligence which his mother had received. Matter of opinion would have had little or no effect upon him; because he felt himself competent, upon an explanation of all that had occurred since his departure from Binford, to make up his own mind, and come to a decision upon Emma's conduct: but matter of fact he could not combat.

He certainly could not have expected any communication from Miss Lovell herself. He was not so certain as to the impracticability of Mrs Harbottle's writing to him to announce the fulfilment of her engagement to plead his cause with her friend. There was no reason, considering the terms upon which they had been living, and considering the nature of the mission she had undertaken, why she should not have done so; and yet, on the other hand, the sudden separation from her husband having taken place since she had seen Lord Weybridge, a difficulty and delicacy, either as to observing a total silence upon that point, or making any reference to it, might have restrained her from opening any thing like a correspondence with an unmarried man, whom

she had known only under her husband's roof as his friend and acquaintance. Her silence, however mortifying, he could therefore account for; but he could not account for the display made by Emma of a new acquaintance domesticated at the Parsonage-house, so immediately upon her return from the society of the friend to whose care the suit of her once evidently-favoured suitor had been entrusted.

These things were passing in his mind, and more than once during the evening he recurred to the name of Montenay, with an interest and anxiety not to be mistaken. This night, therefore, Lady Frances resolved to press upon him the necessity of making some declaration with respect to Lady Katharine, and to tell him, *in confidence*, that by so doing in the morning, he would only anticipate a conversation upon the subject, which the Duchess felt it her duty to have with him the next day; and that by thus forerunning her Grace's intentions, he would secure to himself the credit of a voluntary declaration, rather than the stigma of a forced explanation of his intentions.

Lady Katharine retired to rest early. She had—at least she said so—a head-ache, and she looked languid and pathetic, and her affectionate mother thought sleep, if she could get any, would do her good; and her ladyship quitted the drawing-room evidently out of spirits, and not without a somewhat reproachful glance at Lord Weybridge, who had never gone near her, or even spoken to her, since the perusal of his lady-mother's apothecary's letter.

Far be it from me even to surmise that the Duchess and Lady Frances had entered into any preconcerted arrangement for the purpose of leaving the family trio—for the Doctor, so far as its politics went, might fairly be considered one of the family—to a consultation upon matters of importance—but certain it is, that her Grace was not long in following the example of retiring, which her daughter had set her, at least an hour and a half before her accustomed hour. The Duchess departed, with a significant nod to Lady Frances, given with an expression of countenance which seemed to say—"I wish you would settle it to-night, it will save us a world of difficulty and embarrassment;" nor did her Grace omit to take leave, in the most friendly way, of the Doctor, whose opinion she felt would have great weight in the cabinet; nor to wish Lord Weybridge good night, with one of her sweetest smiles, and a pressure of the hand, which he felt at the moment was ominously maternal.

"Strangers having withdrawn," George, who knew—and, a certain degree, habitually participated in—his excellent friend's partiality for one glass of grog at least, before turning in, and who was ordinarily supported in the pursuit by

Lady Frances's already mentioned bottle of soda-water, ordered all the essentials for such enjoyments, which to the unaccustomed servants—who, till the Doctor's arrival, had not been in the habit of serving refreshments so purely nautical—seemed "passing strange;" being much encouraged therein by his noble mother, who wished to make what the Scotch courts call a "sederunt," in order at once to conclude the matter, which she considered of such vital importance to her own happiness, and her son's respectability.

"Now George," said her ladyship, "now that we are here—three—yourself—your mother—and your faithful and favourite friend—what season can be better for the discussion of a topic which must inevitably be forced upon you to-morrow?"

"What topic may that be?" said Lord Weybridge.

"—Why," said her ladyship, "I will be candid—and I throw myself entirely upon Dr MacGopus's judgment, to decide whether I am right or wrong. The fact is, that your attentions to Lady Katharine Hargrave have become so marked and so pointed, and her reception of them so decidedly favourable, that you are bound to take some decisive step immediately with regard to her. Remember now, I tell you that in what I am saying as your mother this evening, I believe myself only to be anticipating what *her* mother will say to you to-morrow."

"My dear madam," said George, "I am not conscious that my attentions have been particular—I—admit—I think that Lady Katharine is extremely agreeable, and handsome, and all that, and—"

"—And you have taught her to believe in your good opinion, George," said her ladyship—"the effect that conviction has had upon her is evident—to-night—did you ever see such an alteration in her manner, in her appearance, even in her countenance when she saw the interest you took about that French lover of the little dowdy Parson's daughter?"

"Umph," said MacGopus—"that goes for nothing—the ice the young woman ate after dinner disagreed with her. I knew she would be ill in the evening—that was all stomach—nothing to do with heart."

"Heart or not," said Lord Weybridge—"I certainly should be extremely sorry that any conduct of mine should have led either Katharine or her mother to anticipate a proposal on my part, which I certainly had not three weeks since the slightest idea of making. I confess candidly to you both, that if I could believe the history of Miss Lovell's frivolity"—

"Stay, George, stay, my lord," said MacGopus,—"who Miss Lovell?"—

"Psha," said Lord Weybridge—"don't worry me death."

"How should I know," said MacGopus.

"Why, because you have been told a thousand times," said Lord Weybridge,—"I say if I could believe first in the indelicacy of Miss Lovell's conduct with regard to Mrs Harbottle. —"

"—Upon which," interrupted Lady Frances, "you never can possibly form a judgment, till you know Mrs Harbottle's motives for eloping from her husband."

"And which motives," said Lord Weybridge, "from all I have heard from a friend of mine, I honestly admit I most seriously suspect."

"Well then why doubt?" said his mother.

"Because it is impossible not to doubt."

"Then you do doubt," said MacGopus, "and isn't that enough —"

"What damned minutes counts he o'er,
Who doubts, yet doubts, suspects, yet fondly loves."

"That's what I say, Doctor," said her ladyship, much encouraged by MacGopus's advocacy, "Cæsar's wife should not be suspected."

"I don't see how that applies, my lady," said MacGopus,—"Lord Weybridge is never likely to be a Cæsar, and he has no wife."

"I mean sir," said her ladyship, rather angry, "that the doubt of that young woman's propriety ought to satisfy him."

"Quite the contrary my lady," replied the Doctor, "nobody can be satisfied with a doubt, because if you are satisfied no doubt remains."

"Don't quarrel about terms or play upon words," said Lord Weybridge, "I agree with my mother, that the conduct of Miss Lovell is very strange, and I should say, if I had not a very high opinion of her character and disposition that she seems to have been playing a reckless game, that from some unaccountable motive she had plunged into a new sphere of action, and rather gloried in her singularity."

"Is she handsome?" said the Doctor, sipping a glass of mahogany-coloured brandy and water, such as he was wont to make and circulate in the ward room of the Elephant.

"I have told you a hundred times,—beautiful," said his lordship.

"Beautiful! my dear child," said Lady Frances; "I'll tell you Doctor, she has very handsome blue eyes, well formed features, a fair complexion, light hair, and a very pretty figure."

"Umph!" said MacGopus, his huge black eyes rolling about in their orbits; "I don't consider that ugly—and they call her Emma?"

"Oh! you know that," said Lord Weybridge, impatiently.

"Well, and you see Doctor MacGopus," said Lady Frances, "here is this young woman without family, fortune, connexion, or as it seems conduct, on the one hand, who, if George really ever had any penchant for her while domesticated in that odious place, has set him at defiance and evidently made her choice; for, of course, her father even if he were fool enough to allow her to be the companion of a married runaway, would not permit the constant attentions of a young man of rank like this Count ——?"

"——Montenay," said Lord Weybridge.

"Montenay—to be received," continued her ladyship, "without a certainty of some serious and permanent result—there can be no question about *that*."

"I own your arguments are extremely plausible," said Lord Weybridge; "but, I have confessed to you and to this old scarecrow over and over again, a devotion to this misrepresented excellent creature."

"To me!" said the Doctor, "you never did—you made confidences about the Bibi Saab at Calcutta, and the wine man's black-eyed daughter at the Cape, and the beautiful blue-eyed yam-stock at St Helena; but you never confided anything to me about this Miss—whatever her name is—tut man—look at Lady Katharine—there is a lovely young body—blood, beauty, rank, and accomplishment!"

"Psha!" said George, half wavering.

"You are right, Doctor MacGopus," said Lady Frances, "Lady Katharine would make an admirable wife for him."

"I'm not so sure o' that my lady," said the Doctor, "those fine showy creatures about in the world don't always settle down like the quiet ones."

"No to be sure," interrupted George, "the quiet ones for me."

"Why so," said MacGopus, "the quiet ones abroad are the noisiest at home—a tall woman and proud, and a little woman and loud, is the proverb in my country."

"Then whom do you agree with?" said Lady Frances.

"Not with your ladyship," said the Doctor.

"Nor with me," said George.

"Certainly not," replied MacGopus.

"Then you agree with neither of us," said Lady Frances.

"On the contrary, with both of you," answered the Doctor.

"Illustrious humbug," said George; "I shall go to bed. I am sick of this unprofitable discussion about nothing."

"Excuse me, Lord Weybridge," said MacGopus, "about a great deal—it is about whether you are to save your honour and propriety, and all your future prospects, by a visionary scheme of happiness with an obscure but rich muggler Parson's daughter, who has been scampering over the country with a profligate woman, and comes to her father's manse, or whatever you call the thing, with a French dandy count, whose very name makes me sick."

"What have *you* deserted me," said Lord Weybridge.

"No—I am adhering to you and your interests," said MacGopus, who grew eloquent in proportion to the quantity of the swallowed of that liquor which derived its name from the "admirable Vernon."—"I am sure this young lady is attached to you—Lady Frances says you have made her believe you are attached to her—fine man—where are your manners, you have lost them all by grubbing ashore so long."

To Lady Frances this familiarity which was quite uncountable, and would at any other time have been irritating, was quite charming—the rough grating of the doctor's rebuke so unlike the soft melodious tone in which he had been addressing the "ladies" during the earlier part of the evening, sounded like music to her ears, and she sat partly from amazement, and partly because she found it difficult if she ventured to agree with her eccentric coadjutor, would instantly convert himself into her most violent opponent.

"What have I done," said George, "to commit me as you call it, to Katharine. I tell you now as I told you before, I think her an extremely delightful person, I like her society—I love to hear her sing, or speak, for that she does sweetly, and the other agreeably; but I am not conscious of having paid her more attention than is reasonable in a country house, more especially if that country happens to be one's own."

"The Duchess feels it differently," said Lady Frances.

"Let me drink—drink and forget all this," said Lord Weybridge; "let me forget Emma Lovell and the Irish French Count. Come MacGopus make me one of those tremendous north-westerns, that even when I was a doctor you prescribed for me in the Elephant.—I could have overlooked all the elopement story—but that infernal revolution —"

“— Ay de mi,” said the Doctor, “what a whirligig your id is—so now because the poor body has taken a walk with one of the French ‘noblesse,’ you are to cast her off—d—well, well—here drown your sorrows.”

“Sorrows he ought to have none to drown,” said Lady Frances.

“No,” said MacGopus, taking an extra pinch, “all his sorrows were drowned, four months ago, in the Mediterranean.”

Lady Frances was shocked at this unfeeling allusion.

“To be sure,” said the Doctor, glancing off entirely from the point to which she was endeavouring to keep her son, “that must have been a most lubberly business; but, no matter—the Royal Yacht Club in the Mediterranean—a cat in—”

“Come, come,” said Lord Weybridge, “still your satire most excellent Caliban; I wish I knew what I have done to deserve being called to account about Lady Katharine Hargrave.”

“Nothing,” dear George, said Lady Frances, “nothing; only followed the dictates of judgment and good taste. You saw and admired her—constant association has confirmed your first impression, and she is destined to make you happy.”

“Me happy!” said Lord Weybridge, upon whose unaccustomed head the potential mixture of his nautical Mentor began to take considerable effect: “Me!—why, why, my dear mother, you fancy every woman who sees me is in love with me, I believe. Suppose—suppose, I say, at this very moment—oh! that French monster, how I hate the recollection. Well—well—it is all her own fault—, I say if at this very moment, I were to propose to Lady Katharine, I would stake my existence she would refuse me.”

“Commission me, George, to make the experiment,” said Lady Frances, “this very night—for the Duchess is not gone to bed—this very hour I will satisfy you on that point. Come, George.”

“Do, George,” said the Doctor, because he was convinced he would not.

“I will do what is right,” said Lord Weybridge, worked up into a state of excitement very nearly bordering on delirium; “you may tell the Duchess, if you like, that I admire her daughter, and that if she thinks I have evinced more attention towards her than a man without intentions has a right to do—I—I—shall be delighted to marry her.”

“You commission me to say this,” said Lady Frances, “and permit me to put it in my own way—softening down the expressions, and modifying the language.”

"Any thing for a quiet life," said Lord Weybridge, who was at the moment in a state to require quiet more than any thing else.

"Now recollect, George," said Lady Frances, "before I go, the commission is a serious one—it decides your fate—"

"I consider my fate decided already," said George; "I have been duped—deceived—cheated and despised; there are no such things as innocence and virtue, and sincerity in the world."

"Very little, indeed," said the Doctor.

"I tell you honestly," continued George, "I am careless and reckless; I believe marriage the best chance of happiness—not the happiness I once hoped for, but—there—there," said he, starting up, "do what you please—there's a *carte blanche*."

"And a Dame Blanche into the bargain," said the Doctor; "go to bed, my lord—go to bed; take my advice, and think of this again in the morning."

"There can be no occasion for that," said Lady Frances; "the management of the affair is now in my hands—isn't it, my dear George?"

"E'en as you please," said Lord Weybridge, scarcely knowing what he said, and not considerably indebted to his nautical friend for any thing like an explanation.

"Then I'll leave you to finish your evening," said Lady Frances. "Good night! Heaven bless you, dear George:" here she kissed his cheek. "Good night, Doctor—to-morrow we will resume the subject."

"I'll talk it over with you all day, my lady," said MacGopus, not trusting himself sufficiently to rise entirely from his seat; "Good night!"

And so departed Lady Frances, and straightway proceeded to the Duchess's dressing-room, where she found Lady Katharine so much recovered as to have got up to drink some tea, which she fancied she should like, and the Duchess herself sipping the same beverage, just *pour passer le temps*. In this little committee all that had occurred below stairs was detailed by her ladyship, with such additions and new colourings as she thought might make it more amiable and acceptable to Lady Katharine, who bore the announcement of Lord Weybridge's intentions with as much philosophy as "strong affection" could exhibit. After which Lady Frances took leave of her Grace and her future daughter-in-law, in the best possible spirits at having attained her object, and brought matters to a point from which it appeared impossible for her son now to recede.

"Why, what a tom-noddy you have made of yourself," said MacGopus to his noble friend, after Lady Frances had

now drawing-room, "that is, if you care for the daughter."

"Do you mean?" said George.

"Why you have made an offer to Lady Katharine aware of that, I suppose?"

"Not an offer?"

"Not an offer—you have said you'll marry her.

"I'm sorry to trust myself to say so much to any one in the world, if I didn't mean her to accept me."

"Well, Venerable Vanity," said Lord Weybridge; "I acted—I dare say I have talked nonsense; but I don't not marry her?"

"I don't know," said the Doctor, "only you know you were devoted—as you called it—to this creature at that place—the Parson's daughter—two hours after, you commission your mother to arrange a marriage in another quarter."

"I said Lord Weybridge, "she will negotiate no more; it will all end in talk."

"Not of it," said the Doctor.

"Errons," said his Lordship; "I would give the title of this Count Montenay."

"Too late, I tell you," said MacGopus, "your fate is decided—no Count or no Count—true or false—all's one word; come, let us to bed; you'll have a headache to-morrow."

"A headache, perhaps," said Lord Weybridge.

"Your affair," replied the Doctor, "we shall see,

as you thought I was committing myself," said Lord Weybridge, "why did not you stop me—check me?"

"I have I to do with it?" said MacGopus, "I'm only

"You told *me* one story, and I believed you; your mother another, and *she* believed you. She has no claim upon you than I have, so I suppose you will tell the truth. What had I to do with it? As for Lady Katharine, what you told me be true, I would rather marry her daughter with a penny portion, than I would marry this one with a million."

"Why the devil did not you say so!"

"I said so you would have contradicted me, and I contradict myself."

"You are a most unaccountable animal, to be sure."

"I say lord, to bed—to bed," said the Doctor, "to-

"bring us something new; but if you have not seen any of beauties, Dowager, Duchess, daughter of the Duke, or our hands, before twelve o'clock, I'm a Dutch-

"And whatever misery happens to me in consequence
 "—Say it was *me*, my lord," said the Doctor, "good
 night—you'll be better after a sleep. Don't be angry
 me—I dare say it will all come right in the end; so—
 good night."

"Well then, good night," said Lord Weybridge—and
 they parted.

CHAPTER VII.

"Had you a friend so desperately sick—
 That all physicians had forsook his cure,
 All scorched without and all parch'd up within;
 The moisture that maintained consuming Nature
 Licked up, and in a fever fry'd away:
 Could you behold him beg with dying eyes
 A glass of water, and refuse it him
 Because you knew it ill for his disease?
 When he would die without it—How could you
 Deny to make his death more easy to him?"

DRYDEN.

WHEN, after a feverish sleep, disturbed and interrupted
 wild and uncomfortable dreams, Lord Weybridge awoke
 the morning, his feelings were any thing but calm, or sa-
 tisfactory—his recollections were unpleasant—his antici-
 pations distressing.—It was clear that under an irrita-
 tion caused by the unequivocal description of Emma's in-
 stancy in the Binford letter, and the united and sepa-
 rate persuasions, irony, entreaty, and ridicule of his mother
 and his friend, he had empowered the former to pledge him
 the Duchess with respect to her daughter.

As soon as he had partly dressed—his lordship despatched
 his man to MacGopus's room to beg him to come to
 directly. The Doctor, who had previously taken an ho-
 norable "quarter-deck walk" on the terrace, obeyed the summons
 and Lord Weybridge dismissed his valet.

"Doctor," said George, "I believe I have made my
 the most unhappy man in the King's dominions—in a fit of
 spleen, much aggravated by your infernal sneers, I have
 permitted myself to abandon the only woman in the world
 ever cared for, and pledge myself to one, for whom,
 the hour is come, I am sure I care nothing."

"The hour isn't come," said MacGopus—"it is going
 Your mother and the Duchess have been walking in
 flower-garden for the last hour and a half."

“What made them so early?” said his lordship.

“They are not early,” said the Doctor. “What made ~~you~~ so late?”

“Head-ache and fever—all owing to that odious brandy-and-water.”

“Brandy-and-water, in moderation, is a very wholesome thing,” said MacGopus—“I think I am a strong instance of its salubrity.”

“What am I to do?” said his lordship, “of course the conversation must take place after breakfast—am I really committed?”

“Nailed like a bat on a barn-door,” said the Doctor.

“Then I am ruined!” —

“Psha! What’s the matter?—is n’t the young lady noble, and handsome, and accomplished?” —

“—Hang her accomplishments,” said George, “to think I should have been provoked into such silly—such wicked conduct—pledged as I am to Emma.”

“A man should never pledge himself,” said MacGopus, “except at an election, and there it does not signify. ~~H~~ustings pledges go for nothing” —

“—And as for this French Count,” continued his lordship, “why should I be jealous of a French Count?” —

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said MacGopus, “I should think running against an English Baron, he can’t have much chance.”

“Why did not you say *that* last night?” said Lord Weybridge.

“It did n’t occur to me,” replied the Doctor—“at present I tell you that’s past—you have authorized your mother to open the preliminaries with the Duchess, and she ~~has~~ lost no time in doing so. You are as fast in the noose as if you had just returned from church.”

“By Heavens,” said George, “I shall not be able to endure their looks, their words, their remarks at breakfast.”

“Lady Katharine won’t come down,” said MacGopus.

“How may you know that?”

“The Duchess,” said the Doctor, “asked me to give her some advice about her head-aches, and fever, and I recommended her lying in bed.”

“In that I *do* thank you,” said Lord Weybridge.

“So, therefore, I would advise you to prepare for breakfast as fast as you can, and come to your reflections afterwards.”

Saying which, the uncommunicative Doctor retired, and Lord Weybridge began the completion of his toilet.

We have read in an account of an execution, how the culprit bore up with surprising presence of mind, and how

his firmness never forsook him even when the attendants came to pinion his arms, nor even while the great finisher of the law fastened the fatal noose round his neck. The fortitude of such unhappy sufferers was emulated by his lordship during his preparations for the breakfast room. He felt the noose already fastened, and having been self-condemned, had not even the distant gleaming hope of a reprieve before his eyes—all his thoughts dwelt upon procrastination and delay, and as he was quite certain that nothing could be said during breakfast itself, surrounded as they should be by servants, he resolved upon making a dash at the outset, and endeavour, if possible, to evade any thing like a *tête-à-tête* with any body during the rest of the day; in order to achieve which object, he resolved never to part with MacGopus until dressing time for dinner—but the delay was childish—it was like smelling to a bitter draught which was sure to be administered, and which he had himself proposed to swallow.

The remorse which his precipitancy on the previous night caused him, was deeper than either his friend or his mother, or certainly Lady Katharine could have imagined, and he only relieved himself from the poignancy of his feelings by anathematizing the Doctor in terms the least gentle that can well be imagined.

At breakfast, the gracious and complacent smile of the Duchess, which played over a countenance expressive of a deep and intimate interest in all his lordship's proceeding, was worse to him than the grin of a Gorgon. He saw precisely all that was passing in her mind, and he watched the interchange of looks between her grace and his mother, and it was with difficulty he restrained himself from bursting into an exclamation, at once renouncing all his promises and permissions of the preceding evening, concluding the display of his feelings by rushing out of the room, throwing himself into his travelling carriage, and starting for a tour.

The sinking sailor sometimes finds a plank—the engulfed miner hears the sound of help at hand—the benighted wanderer sees some friendly light to save him from perdition. Little did Lord Weybridge, when he sat down to breakfast, anticipate what would occur before he had concluded it, which not only should rescue him from the jeopardy in which he felt himself, but carry him, as fast as horses' feet could move, to the very spot of all others to which he was most anxious to go.

Scarcely had he finished his coffee, when his own man entered the breakfast-room, pale with alarm, and breathless with haste, bearing in his hand a letter, which he whispered

as Lord had that moment arrived by express. It came from Binford.

"Binford!" exclaimed Lady Frances; "what! is my cottage burnt down?"

"No," said Lord Weybridge; "hear this: and he reads as follows:—

"Binford Hall, four o'clock, A.M.

"MY LORD,—At the desire of Mr Harbottle, who, I regret to say, lies without hope of recovery, I write these few lines, to request—to entreat and implore are his own words—that your lordship will not lose a moment, if it be possible, in coming to him. From myself I may add, that a few hours may render your journey needless. He has some most important communication to make to *you*, to whom, of all persons in the world, he says it ought for many reasons to be made. His fever and delirium are violent; and although I have little hope of his recovery, I have no hesitation in saying, that the gratification of his desire to see your lordship would, more than any thing, I believe, tend to compose his mind, and reduce the irritation under which he labours. Let me venture to entreat your immediate compliance with what I almost fear you may consider his dying wish.

"I remain, my Lord, your Lordship's obedient servant,

"W. GROVER."

"From Doctor Grover is the letter?" said Lady Frances. "Well, now, what a shocking thing, George. What will you do, dear?"

"Go this instant;" said Lord Weybridge.

"Go!" said her ladyship.

"Go!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"To be sure, go," said the Doctor.

"What earthly use is your going?" said Lady Frances. "What was or is Mr Harbottle to you, or you to him, that you should send express to see *you*, of all the people in the world?"

"My dear mother," said Lord Weybridge, "your eloquence will all be vainly exerted upon this occasion. I have eaten of his bread, I have drank of his wine; his house has sheltered me, and his welcome has greeted me; he is ill—perhaps dying. His last desire is to see me; shall I refuse him?"

"But such a man!" said Lady Frances.

"Exactly such a man, my dear mother," said Lord Weybridge, "as you found it convenient or agreeable to visit; and who, although rude in manner, was kind after his nature."

"Yes, like a bear," said her ladyship, who saw in this unexpected expedition a most dangerous impediment to her manœuvrings.

"Well, like a bear if you please," said George; "but if ladies admire bears, they must abide by their taste. I repeat to you, he has been kind to me—I now may be of use to him; and if not on his death-bed, as the physician thinks it, he begs to see me—I go—Here," continued his Lordship—"order four horses to the chariot directly; and you, my gentle Mac, will be my companion on the journey."

"Dear, dear," said the Duchess, "what a very extraordinary circumstance."

"Most extraordinary," said Lady Frances, "to send for George, whose only attraction to his house, as I believe, was his pretty wife."

"It is to prove that Mrs Harbottle was *not* my only attraction," said Lord Weybridge, "that I am going to the house where she is not."

"Oh, I dare say they have made it all up again," said her ladyship, "and this is some trick of hers to get you there."

"I think," said Lord Weybridge, "Mrs Harbottle is too well aware of my feelings upon such matters to fancy me into her cicisbeo. Come, Doctor, bestir yourself—my *fidus Achates*—come."

"Are you really going?" said the Doctor.

"Why to be sure I am; have I not said it—have I not ordered horses—come—come—"

"Of course you will not stay," said Lady Frances.

"*Cela depend*," replied his lordship, "I shall stay to fulfil whatever duty I may consider it right to perform. I shall venture to establish myself at the cottage, with your ladyship's permission, and shall moreover introduce the Doctor to your snuggery, in the full and perfect confidence of his finding fault with every part of it."

Lady Frances, of course, smiled agreeably, and looked quite charmed at the idea, but her heart ached, as any body might have known who knew her countenance, because in a moment she saw all that would follow. Harbottle might have lived for ages or died the week before, and it would have been a matter of perfect indifference to her; but she anticipated the meeting which must infallibly take place between the Lovells and her son—she dreaded the effect of the interview—she feared the plausibility with which the Parson's daughter might explain *her* acquaintance with the Frenchman, and, perhaps, completely exonerate herself from any thing like impropriety in the journey with Mrs Harbottle; in short, if that terrible personage who is said to make his appearance immediately after being talked of, had

arrived at Severnstoke, instead of the messenger from the sick Squire, he could scarcely have been less welcome, or have created more dismay.

"Mind my dear George—now do take care," said her ladyship, "if you *do* go to the cottage pray see that your beds are well aired."

"That's of no consequence," said the Doctor, "the prejudice against the danger of lying in damp sheets—except, indeed, to a printer—is all a vulgar error."

"My dear sir!" said her ladyship.

"Come MacGopus," said Lord Weybridge, "let us have no discussions—I have a duty to perform, and the rapidity with which I perform it constitutes part of the duty itself. I shall return as soon as possible—and the sooner I go, in all probability, the sooner I shall be home again; meanwhile, my dear Duchess, make yourselves as happy as you can—there are two or three people, I believe, expected to-day and to-morrow, and to you my dear mother I trust their reception, with all due ardour and hospitality—and now come along."

"Not one word for poor Katharine," said the Duchess, "who will sincerely lament missing you—I know."

"Oh!" said Lord Weybridge, "present my kindest regards and remembrances—we shall, however, meet again so soon—and I hate the formalities of leave-taking—come, come, let us prepare ourselves."

Saying which, he literally turned MacGopus out of the breakfast-room, and pushing every preparation with the greatest rapidity, was in a short time waiting for nothing but his servant and the carriage."

There remained two manœuvres to be performed, for which there was just sufficient time—as soon as George had quitted the breakfast parlour, the Duchess hurried to Lady Katharine's room—she found her in her dressing-room, having breakfasted; two small plates entirely empty—two egg-cups quite vacant, and only half a well-sized loaf remaining on the table, indicating that her ladyship's appetite had not suffered—herself dressed for the morning—her the Duchess hurried down stairs, to take leave of George by surprise just as he should be stepping into the carriage—this was the manœuvre of the Duchess.

Two minutes before his lordship's foot was on the steps, Robert, Lady Frances's footman, made his appearance, evidently labouring under some embarrassment of a serious character—he suggested, that as my lord would go to Dale Cottage, his presence might perhaps be more useful as being better acquainted with the *locale* than any of his lordship's

footmen, and that, perhaps her ladyship, if Mr Roberts had no objection, would allow him to go in the rumble and —

“To be sure,” said Lady Frances, “tell Roberts, that I think, if his lord likes it you had better go—to be sure—very thoughtful indeed, Robert.”

Wide apart were the spheres in which moved the Duchess and the footman—but the influence of passion and policy was pretty equal in either. The Duchess roused her noble daughter, and Robert affected an interest in Lord Weybridge, the one to carry the point of producing an interview, between his lordship and Lady Katharine, and the other to secure himself the pleasure of an interview, and a brief association with Mary Green!!

One might stop to moralize upon these graduated trickeries, but we have not time; the horses were actually at the door, and his lordship sensitively grateful for the particular attentions of the lovely Katharine and her disinterested parent, and perfectly alive to all the embarrassments and anxieties of his mother, having thrown himself into the carriage followed by his travelling companion, Roberts, with Robert, the footman mounted the rumble, and the post-boys giving the rein to their steeds, away went the noble baron and his nautical friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ ——— His eye-balls roll at death,
Behold the ling’ring soul’s convulsive strife,
His thick short breath catches at parting life.”

DRYDEN.

THE suddenness of all this proceeding, which was quite in accordance with Lord Weybridge’s wishes, and far beyond his hopes, inasmuch as his extrication from the difficulty in which he was plunged, gave the affair all the character of a dream. To MacGopus it made not the slightest difference, whether he were musing by his fireside, reading his book, contradicting his friend, or scampering across a country at the rate of a dozen miles an hour;—he was equally immovable, imperturbable, and philosophical. They had proceeded three miles before either of them spoke.

“I think I’m out of *that*, Doctor?” said his lordship, breaking silence.

“Out of what? my lord,” said MacGopus,

"The scrape I got myself into last night."

"Not you," said the Doctor; "you'll never get beyond the tether of your lady-mother's apron string; your fate is sealed."

"It seems something like an interposition of fortune in your favour," said Lord Weybridge, "that Harbottle should press this wonderfully strong desire to see me; and still more curious is it, as it will afford me an opportunity of seeing Emma, and —"

"You must not see her," said MacGopus; "what would be the use of ripping up old wounds, and putting the poor girl into an agitation, exciting her hopes and flattering her vanity when you have just put it out of your power to realise the promises you have made her."

"Do you mean to say," said Lord Weybridge, "that if I find her blameless in the affair of Mrs Harbottle's elopement—and I cannot but believe that the desire of her husband to see me has its origin in his anxiety for her exculpation upon that point—I have any possible excuse for flinching from the fulfilment of my promise made to her friend?"

"The French Count!" said the Doctor, taking snuff as usual.

"Hang the French Count —"

"Why didn't you think all these things over last night," said MacGopus; "I'll tell you why—the Duchess's daughter has got hold of you, and she pleases you, and amuses you, and flatters your vanity, and you had thrown over this Parson's daughter, and had forgotten her."

"I forget —"

"Yes you had," said the doctor, "forgotten her so far, that if this strange thing had not happened, you would before now have been as firmly engaged to marry Lady Katharine as you were engaged to marry the other, two months ago—now that circumstances have roused your mind from the repose which it has been enjoying in society to which you have become habituated with people, whose whole aim and object are to make themselves agreeable to you—you return to your senses, and every hour as you approach the scene of what you once thought happiness, you will find the recollection strengthen upon you, till at last if you permit your feelings to get the better of you, you will go so far as to renew your offer to your first love, even although she has been the associate of a wanton wife and the willing listener to the professions of a foreign adventurer—you must not see her, George."

"You might as well prevent the needle pointing to the pole," said his lordship.

"That's a very odd simile," said the Doctor; "you may rely upon it, your pole, as you call it, is in another sphere."

"I most certainly will see Miss Lovell."

"You wont."

"But, my dear Doctor, I tell you I will."

"We shall see."

Here Lord Weybridge had recourse to his long established method of avoiding any farther altercation with his positive friend. He said no more, but throwing himself into a corner of the carriage, with a half-uttered exclamation of rage at the obstinacy of his companion, affected to sleep, MacGopus chuckling to himself at having effectually silenced his agitated companion.

This sort of discussion was occasionally renewed during the journey, which was pursued as rapidly as possible, and terminated at the door of Binford Hall, about ten o'clock at night.

When the carriage drew up, what a melancholy contrast did the appearance of things present to that which was last exhibited to George's sight! One faint light glimmered in the Hall, and one or two peals at the bell were rung before any one appeared to open the doors. The drawing-room, once the bright centre of a brilliant circle of apartments, stood open, but dark, and the night wind whistled along the once well warmed and brightly lighted passages.

Lord Weybridge had arranged that the Doctor should proceed with the carriage to the cottage, and urge by his presence the preparations for the night's accommodation, about which Mr Roberts, the valet, and Robert, the footman, had directions forthwith to busy themselves.—His lordship had, in the first instance, requested MacGopus to stay at the Hall; but he peremptorily refused, from a feeling that his appearance there, might create some groundless jealousy on the part of the medical attendants, and have the air of intrusion, of which his pride and dignity could not for a moment endure the suspicion.

"How is your master?" said Lord Weybridge, to the servant who appeared.

"As bad as bad can be, sir," replied the man; "the doctors think he can't live out the night."

"Tell Dr Grover that I am here, but let him be told," said Lord Weybridge, "so that Mr Harbottle may not hear it."

The servant ushered Lord Weybridge into the Library, and proceeded to do his lordship's bidding. The Library, like the rest of the house, exhibited all the melancholy marks of desertion and neglect. The cold stillness of the room, which erst had rung with laughter, struck upon

George's heart; nor was this feeling unmixed with the recollections of the society he had enjoyed here, and the discretions which he had somehow to atone for at home. Every object revived his affection for Emma, and convinced him, that however agreeable the dream in which he had been slumbering away his hours at Severnstoke, the moment of awakening had arrived, and all perhaps too late.

From his reverie Lord Weybridge was aroused by the entrance into the apartment of Doctor Grover, who, after having made his excuses for taking the liberty of writing so hastily and abruptly to request his lordship's attendance, told him that he believed his unhappy patient had but a few hours to live—the case which he at present was enjoying he believed to be only a symptom of mortification, and he felt happy that his lordship had so kindly and so speedily complied with Mr Harbottle's anxious desire, as he evidently had something most important to disclose to him, and, as he had said over and over again, to him alone.

"Has Mrs Harbottle been sent for?" asked Lord Weybridge.

"She has," replied the Doctor, "and will, I know, if possible, be here—her own state of health, Mr Lovell, who is in Mr Harbottle's room, has informed, is so delicate, that caution was necessary in taking such a journey rapidly. However, it is a gratifying circumstance to know how anxiously her husband desires to see her."

"Mr Lovell is here, you say," said Lord Weybridge.

"Yes; with the kindness and devotion to his duty and his friend, he has made an exertion beyond his strength, and has been conveyed hither—himself an invalid. Mr Harbottle has appeared much more tranquil since his arrival; indeed he has scarcely left him for the last three days."

"And Miss Lovell ——?" said his lordship.

"—Is at the Rectory: in scenes like that to which you will soon be summoned of course she could in no degree participate: nor did we consider it prudent, under the circumstances of the case, to agitate her by more frequent accounts of the progress of the inflammation than absolutely necessary. Her care and anxiety about her father, so unusual as he is to quit his home, have been quite sufficient to keep her mind painfully employed; and we have restricted Count Montenay—whom, of course, your lordship knows—to three visits here in the day, to carry her intelligence as to how matters are going on. However, to night, I apprehend, will close the sad history, and poor Mr Lovell may be restored to the calm retirement of his own peaceful dwelling."

"But Count Montenay," said Lord Weybridge, "is"—

"I beg your lordship's pardon for one moment," said Doctor Grover, "some one calls me."

Saying which he went to the door of the room, and found the officious Popjoy, who had been sent by the patient to summon the Doctor, and to conjure Lord Weybridge, if he had arrived, to come to him instantly. He had heard the sound of wheels, when the carriage drew up to the door, and with an earnestness, amounting almost to frenzy, entreated—implored—and at last insisted that not a moment should be lost before he saw his friend, as he emphatically called his lordship.

To such a summons, under the sanction of Doctor Grover, there could be but one answer, and George followed the medical man along the lobby, which led to what was in other times Harbottle's morning room, but in which now stood his bed; for, as has been already stated, he had never left the ground floor of the house since Fanny's departure. The door was opened, and George entered. All was still—save a subdued moan, uttered by the unhappy master of the mansion.

"Who's there?" cried Harbottle, raising himself in bed. "You—you, George—George Frederick Sheringham—!"

"Be calm, my dear friend," said Grover.

"Be calm," repeated Lovell.

"Calm—I can't be calm—George—George!"

"I am here at your desire, Harbottle," said Lord Weybridge, at the same moment taking Lovell's hand affectionately, as he passed to the bed-side.

"I see—I see!" cried Harbottle. "Now—now—there's no time to be lost; Doctor—Grover—all of you—go—go—leave us; you—you Lovell stay—go, all of you. I'll give ye a thousand pounds to go this minute—I've plenty of money still—go!"

Grover beckoned his colleague and the servant, who was in attendance, and they retired.

"Are they gone?—is the door shut?—quite shut—close—close—close!"

"Yes," said Lord Weybridge; "but now let me entreat you to calm yourself."

"It's all over, George; let me call you George—to-morrow I shall not be able to call you any thing—I'm dying—they know it—I know it—but I could not die in peace—in peace I cannot die even as it is —"

"Be patient," said Lovell, "be calm."

"Oh! Sheringham! I have sent for you—to unburthen my mind. You were my friend—I loved you—I esteemed you; you had a regard for my wife—my poor, poor ill-used wife! You loved Harvey—poor Harvey! you love Emma—his daughter—you do—you do—I know all that."

Well, but now?" said Lovell.

I know—I know;" said Harbottle, "I'm coming to it cannot buy time—or breath—I have none to spare. He knows the history—Lovell knows it all, George—but he would never have told it. It is to clear my wife—my Fanny—he I was once so fond of—so proud of. She's coming, though—she's to be here, George—I shall see her yet;—give me some drink—I must speak it all yet;—my tongue parched —"

Why agitate yourself in this manner?" said George, nobody doubts or suspects your wife, nobody —"

Aye, that's it," said Harbottle, "but I did—that villain Ellis—he's gone—it was my last act—he's gone—last night, he went—villain—but listen: I gave the cue to the child to suspect her; she left me—fled, and Lovell's pure daughter went with her, she is injured by it—she is abetted and suspected. He—this good, kind, kind man, would never vindicate his child at my expense. I must—warn me, George—you will consent to be one of the executors of my will—I have done this on purpose—my wife—my wife has every thing—all I can do to atone for my conduct. Jealousy—meanness—drunkenness —"

Here again he fell back exhausted. Lovell spoke to Lord Weybridge a few words.

No—no," said Harbottle, "I have strength left for that; George—hear it—hear me—Harvey—how dare I pronounce his name—he was my friend—your friend—he—George, George—I am his murderer!"

Hush! hush!" said Lovell.

No—hush! let it be heard—let it be heard," said Harbottle; "Sheringham, my friend—my once loved friend—I will not strike him to the earth—my hand was never stained with his blood; but his blood is upon my soul—money—money cannot buy that off."

You rave, Harbottle," said Lord Weybridge.

No—no; hear me—I recollect all the circumstances—fit you should hear them from my lips. I went to Bradshaw's to shoot—we were out; while we were beating a partridge, Harvey, who had ridden over from Mordaunt's, joined

You see I am not mad—I recollect all the circumstances. Nobody knew of our differences—not even Harvey himself was aware of the strength of my feelings. He joined—he spoke to me—I returned his salutation. We were an hour near each other in the field. Ten times did I say as if I should like to shoot him on the spot."

Oh for mercy's sake!" said Lord Weybridge.

I killed him at last," said Harbottle, with a horrid smile; "I did! Listen—listen—hear me; he was pressed to dine

at Bradfield's—he assented—we dined; we drank much wine—he saw my coldness of manner—I saw he did—there was some joke—some bet, I believe about drinking—and he really, he drank more wine than ever I saw him drink, but not so much as I did; yet I recollect all—the party broke up—we two were the only men going away—all the rest of the party slept in the house. He had no servant—I had none. Our horses were brought to the door together. Bradfield came out with us—we mounted, and took leave of him together. Give me some drink, Lovell.”

Lord Weybridge handed him some lemonade, which he sipped.

“We rode forward together, without speaking, for some minutes. He made an observation—I answered as I should have answered a stranger, and put my horse into a canter. He did the same—my blood was boiling—my head whirled—my heart was full of revenge, and I only cast about in my mind how to pick a quarrel with him which might have no reference to what I fancied my real grievance; but I could not, in my confusion of ideas, hit upon any thing plausible, and we cantered on till we came to the corner by Brousted Gap. There it was he broke silence, by asking me if there was not a way across the common which led into the upper road, by Mordaunt's. The thought—the Devil, I should say, glanced into my mind at the moment; the night was pitchy dark—‘Yes,’ said I, ‘there, d’ye see yon light—ride straight for it, as straight as you can ride—that light is in the upper road.’ ‘Good night, Harbottle,’ said Harvey; I could not answer him—my tongue clove to my mouth.—They were the last words he ever spoke—I knew they would be, George! He put spurs to his horse, and galloped off at my bidding. I knew what was to happen. I pulled up, and listened.—I sat in an agony of anxiety, my ears throbbed, and my heart beat—I heard the hoofs patting the turf—the sound grew fainter, but still I heard them going—it lasted but a minute. I heard a sharp cry, and then a crash—it was the headlong fall, of both man and beast, into a deep gravel pit, which I knew lay right in his path,—there—there his mangled body was found the next morning.”

Harbottle sank on his pillow for a moment—he raised himself—

“I hear the horrid crash and it was momentary clatter now—not a sound—not a groan followed—all was still.—I rode home as hard as I could gallop—I fancied Harvey was behind me. I smelt his blood in my nostrils, and tasted it in my throat. I came here—here—in the room over this—I gloried in the work. I bragged of it to my wife—I did—jeered her about Harvey, and gloried in being his murderer!

left me, George, as soon as the day dawned ; was she **ng**? This good, good, kind man's daughter, like a **min-**ring angel, went with her to her aunt's. Oh! George! shall never see her again. She won't come—no—no—now she won't—I dare not pray for her—no—nor for self—yet now you know the truth ; you ought to know

Curse me not! I am not mad now!—I was mad then **aving** mad!—but Fanny is innocent!—and Emma, who **been** traduced, is innocent ; I alone am guilty."

"Can this be true," said Lord Weybridge to Lovell.

"I have been till now the sole depositary of the dreadful **ret**," said Lovell ; "no evidence could have substantiated **a** fact legally ; he confessed it to his wife, and she quitting **m** immediately, gave me that account, which he has just **peated**, as the reason of her forming the sudden and **im-**mutable resolution never again to associate with him."

"What is it you are saying?" said Harbottle. "All you **an** say of my guilt, say—if it will answer any end of just-**æ**, you have my consent to publish it all. Whatever is ne-**cessary** to establish Fanny's character, let every body know ; **ut**, oh! she will not come to me, George. I would give **m**—twenty thousand pounds, for one forgiving smile—one **ngle** kiss, such as she used to give me ; but, no—blood!—**lood**!—blood! She will not come near me!"

Here he seemed to faint from exhaustion, and Lord Wey-**ridge** thought it advisable to call Dr Grover into the room. **le** came : Harbottle immediately recognized him.

"You are returned, doctor," said he.

"I merely came to see if you wanted any thing," said **rover**.

"No, no! nothing! I feel sleepy, doctor; very sleepy."

"Indulge it, sir;" said the physician.

"Ah! nothing will avail ; it's all over!" said Harbottle.—**So** much the better! but I am easier! I am happier, **heringham**!—shake hands with me—bear with me—bear **ith** a repentant sinner! You and Lovell will have all my **fairs** to arrange ; forgive the trouble I impose : it will be **eful** to Fanny to have a man of your rank and character to **pport** her—you will—I know you will—and Lovell—and **s** daughter. Oh! Lovell!—remember me, kindly, to your **cellent** child."

A flood of tears here relieved the unhappy man.

"Try and sleep, sir," said Grover ; "lay your head on **e** pillow."

"I will, I will," said Harbottle. "I am sure I shall **leep**!—but hear!—mind what I say—if Fanny comes—if it **one**—two—three o'clock—any hour—don't mind my **æeping**—wake me—wake me, the moment she arrives.

Bless her! bless her!—Now, don't forget! promise me *that*."

"Rely upon me," said Grover.

In a few minutes, Harbottle, as he had anticipated, fell into a profound slumber.

He never woke again.

CHAPTER IX.

"Death is the lightest evil we should fear—
'Tis certain—'tis the consequence of life.
Th' important question is not when we die,
But how we die." —

HAYARD.

THE dreadful scene which Lord Weybridge and Lovell had just witnessed, had a powerful effect upon their feelings—to Lovell the intelligence conveyed in Harbottle's confession was of course not new; upon the mind of George it acted doubly; first, in exciting the most unqualified horror at the barbarity of the wretched culprit, and the bitterest grief for his lamented and unhappy friend Harvey; and, secondly, in at once exonerating from all blame or imputation his beloved Emma, who now stood wholly and entirely acquitted of indiscretion or impropriety in sharing the sorrows and journey of her wretched friend, driven as she had been from the home of her husband by no fault, no failing of her own, but by the horror naturally created by his savage boast of being a murderer.

All the doubts which Lady Frances Sheringham had been labouring for weeks to instill into George's mind were scattered, dissipated, and obliterated, by this most unlooked for discovery; all the reflections which she had cast upon the selfish meanness and hypocritical piety of the good clergyman were exploded and overthrown, and he felt anxious for the moment when he might throw himself at Miss Lovell's feet and implore her forgiveness, for having suffered himself to be duped into the belief of a possibility of her imprudence or her father's venality; for to the latter base source, Lady Frances affected to attribute the permission he had given to his child to be the partner of Mrs Harbottle's retreat.

At the suggestion of Dr Grover, Mr Lovell, who had not quitted the Hall for the last two days, agreed to return home, the doctor giving it as his opinion that "all was over," but promising that if, contrary to his expectations, nature

could rally, he would immediately send to the Rectory and Dale Cottage, to which, also, Lord Weybridge agreed to retire to wait the event which was hourly expected, or the operation for the better, at which the doctor so slightly lanced; in fact, it was not until Harbottle himself was fully convinced he was past recovery, that he could prevail upon himself to make such a confession as that, which they had just heard.

To some it may appear strange, that he should have been induced under any circumstances to proclaim himself so great a culprit on his death-bed, but it should be recollected that Lovell was already apprized of the affair; at least Mrs Harbottle had confided to him so much, that the subsequent admissions of her husband to him, completed the horrid history; and that *he*, being the sole depositary of the secret, and knowing how materially Mrs Harbottle had been injured in popular opinion by the step she had taken, and aware, of course, that a proportion of the blame and censure which attached to her, devolved upon his poor innocent child, was most anxious that some less interested person than himself should also be admitted into Harbottle's confidence, at a period when the disclosure could only affect his memory, by which, not only his exemplary widow would be restored to her place in society, but the mean and insidious calumnies of the coteries of Binford and their various centrifugal ramifications might be exploded and exposed. It was he, therefore, who, when he saw the disposition of Harbottle, as his illness increased, to apply to Lord Weybridge to accept the executorship of the will conjointly with himself, urged upon him the propriety and justice of exculpating with his own lips his unhappy and injured wife, thus enabling Lord Weybridge whenever the occasion might offer, to vindicate her reputation and support her character; and Harbottle was the more ready to agree to Lovell's proposition, from the certainty that Lady Frances would be, as indeed he had heard she already had been, one of the first to asperse poor Fanny's reputation, and attribute her separation from her husband, to the worst possible causes.

In pursuance of the physician's advice, Mr Lovell proceeded, with assistance, to his pony chaise, in which—strange coincidence of circumstances after their extraordinary separation—he was driven by Lord Weybridge to the Rectory, his lordship hardly knowing what the reverend gentleman was observing upon the merits of the case, or the horrors of the exhibition they had just witnessed, while his thoughts were fixed upon the possibility—the mere possibility—of his being in ten minutes more in the presence of the much injured Emma, having utterly forgotten that there

existed such a being as Lady Katharine, or, what was even more terrible, any thing very like an engagement between them.

They reached the Rectory gate. George drove in, and drew up at the door with Buxton-like dexterity.

"Is Miss Lovell gone to bed," said the Rector to the servant.

"Yes, sir," replied the man; "my young mistress went to bed about eleven and the Count went to bed before that."

The Count!—"Aye, there's the rub."—George felt himself strangely agitated.

"I wont ask you to come in, Lord Weybridge," said the Rector, "for I know you have a friend at the Cottage—you'll take the chaise."

"Oh no, no," said Lord Weybridge, "not I—I—would rather walk—I'm cold—or—indeed I prefer walking."

"If we should not be summoned in the course of the night," said Lovell, "we shall meet in the morning—perhaps your lordship will call here."

"Yes, yes," said Lord Weybridge—"yes, my dear sir—that I will—good night—good night—don't stay in the air."

"Good night," said the Rector.

"The devil take that Count," said Lord Weybridge, before he had got out of the grounds. "So—all my castles are down again—what signifies her prudence with respect to Mrs Harbottle, if she cannot palliate her conduct with this infernal French fellow—I might know all about him by asking any of the people around me, but I will not. I will not suffer myself to be prejudiced; he may be no lover after all, and the scandal and absurdity of the neighbours might give a colouring to his acquaintance at the Parsonage, which the real facts of the case do not in the least justify—no—I am resolved—I'll see the man—and if possible see him with Emma. I think I know enough of the world to form a judgment of the state of their intimacy by appearances, and after the disclosure of to-night, by which her conduct stands cleared to view, I will not permit myself to be swayed or governed by any thing short of ocular demonstration or *vivâ voce* evidence."

From himself and his own affairs his thoughts reverted to the wretched subject of his late contemplation, and the wreck of the happiness and respectability, which to the eye at least appeared so firmly established at the Hall but a few weeks before. A thousand things occurred to his recollection which brought his murdered friend before him, while almost every incident with which he was connected, involved his still beloved Emma in its developement.—Full of clashing hopes, and conflicting sentiments, the noble baron reached the cottage.

There he found MacGopus sitting over a blazing fire, reading with the deepest attention an odd volume of some book which happened to be lying upon the table when he came in, absorbed in its contents, and almost unconscious of his Right Honourable friend's arrival.

"Well doctor," said his lordship, "I suppose your patience is nearly exhausted; we could not get away before."

"Oh!" said MacGopus, "your friend took more killing than the physician thought for—is he dead?"

"No," said George, "but he has fallen asleep, and Dr Trover is of opinion that it is his last."

"Why should it be his last," said MacGopus, "quite contrary."

"That cannot be," said George, "for it is evidently not his first."

"Psha!" said MacGopus, "I didn't say it was his first. I say that after this sleep he may awake refreshed—you don't seem to have suffered much in your feelings if you can condescend to quibble."

"Why, what I have heard and seen are not calculated to create any great sorrow, or move much pity—I drove Lovell home."

"Lovell—stop now," said the doctor, "who's Lovell?"

"Oh!" cried Lord Weybridge, infuriated at the calm, placid, persevering inquiry about a man whose name he had heard five hundred times in the course of the day. "What nonsense—why Mr Lovell is the Rector."

"Oh!—aye," said MacGopus, "well—how should I know?"

"Have they announced our supper?" said Lord Weybridge, "I am faint and weary—and moreover, Harbottle's executor, which will detain me here two or three days —"

"You must not stop here," said MacGopus.

"I must."

"Your mother will go crazy, and the Duchess grow desperate."

"I must do my duty to my departed friend."

"He is not departed."

"Well, but he cannot linger long."

"Don't be too sure of that—if the doctor leaves him to himself, the chances are that he will."

"What a satire upon your own profession?" said Lord Weybridge.

"I don't profess to be a physician," said MacGopus: "surgeon's work is all fair and above board—a cut's a cut, and the thing speaks for itself. I hate physicians, they keep grubbing like moles in the dark. How should a clock-maker know what's the matter with a clock unless he looks

at the works. I never regretted any thing so much in my life as not having pulled a physician's nose five-and-twenty years ago."

"And yet you would not go into Harbottle's house to see him."

"Not I," said MacGopus; "I'm only a passenger, as I once told a cockney on board a ship that was foundering—it is no business of mine."

"You are a strange compound of materials," said Lord Weybridge, "when I have you here, I don't know what to do with you; and when I have n't, I don't know what to do without you."

"Come, ring for supper," said MacGopus, "I'm starving."

George, who had never entirely shaken off the awe with which MacGopus had inspired him, when he was a "young gentleman" in His Majesty's ship *Elephant*, under his special patronage, obeyed the surly sounding mandate of his guest, and a few minutes placed them at table.

"There now, I am better," said the doctor, having concluded his repast and drawing his chair towards the fire, "now for a pinch of snuff and a glass of grog, and then for a turn in."

"Well," said Lord Weybridge, "one thing has resulted from this unexpected application of Harbottle's, and I think you will be glad to hear it Doctor. Emma's character and conduct stand completely fair and clear to view, and her suffering friend and companion is exonerated from every suspicion which envy or malice may have excited against her."

"Glad!" said MacGopus—"not I, on the contrary, I am particularly sorry—because if this Parson's daughter had been what your mother made you believe her to be, you would have treated her properly by casting her off, and engaging yourself anew; as it is, you will have the perpetual satisfaction through life of knowing that you have behaved most scandalously."

"Why," said George, "didn't you yourself join in running poor Emma down?"

"To be sure I did," replied the Doctor. "You chose to exalt her; I knew you must never marry her; and so, as I saw a fair opening for a cut, I thought it no sin to take advantage of it."

"But now that these calumnies are falsified ——"

"You never can have Emma," said MacGopus.

"Never?"

"No; and therefore, as I have already said, you will live a life of wretchedness with your right honourable wife, and gratify the wishes of your mother's heart by breaking your own."

"What a pleasant picture!"

"It's one of your own painting, my Lord;—and so Mrs Harbottle's running away is justifiable ——"

"Perfectly—entirely."

"Upon what grounds?"

"That I cannot—at all events yet—confide even to you."

"What! I suppose her husband smoked tobacco—or eat onions—or drank too much wine—or did as he liked, without asking her leave—or objected to her flirting? Ay de mi, it's a nice world we live in."

"Assure yourself that she had the most serious reasons for quitting him—reasons which, when known, will place her above the shafts of malice."

"Well, why not tell me what they are?"

"Till Harbottle is dead, my lips are sealed."

"I should think if your friend the physician is up there still, you may open them without injuring the patient."

"I am convinced, so will you be; and being satisfied of the justice and propriety of her conduct, it naturally follows that Emma is equally blameless."

"Well but George," said MacGopus, "putting aside the elopement, and all that, how do you get over the French Count—eh?"

"Oh—hang the French Count."

"As many as you please, with all my heart," said the Doctor, who hated a Frenchman as cordially as ever Nelson did. "But he is not dangling yet, my Lord?"

"I am afraid he is," muttered his lordship, who did not venture to quibble openly in the presence of his friend, who could not endure—because, like the rest of his countrymen, he could not understand—a pun. It however must be confessed that the Count was yet a stumbling-block in the way of a perfect reconciliation between Lord Weybridge and Miss Lovell; still the moment was not far distant, when he would boldly face the foe, and make such a reconnoissance in person, as should satisfy his mind as to the force and intention of the enemy.

"Pray, are we to sit up here till your friend dies?" said MacGopus, with one of his arch chuckles.

"No," replied his lordship; "should that event occur, a message will be immediately sent here; or should he linger on till the morning, we shall of course hear, and I shall again resume my post at his bed side."

"Ugh—he wont live till morning."

"Why, just now you said he would."

"What does that signify? His own doctor says he wont, and these fashionable fellows, when once they have issued their *fat*, generally back their opinion by their practice."

"My dear Doctor," said Lord Weybridge, "you are more than usually bitter to-night."

"Not I," said MacGopus; "on the contrary, I never was in a better temper. But I see that you are in a web-caught as securely as ever fly was, and that you will make yourself either ——"

"Oh spare me, my dear Mentor!" interrupted his lordship. "Rely upon my prudence as a man—my spirit as a gentleman—and my honour as a peer—not to speak of my sincerity as a sailor."

"Your prudence you showed in first attaching yourself here," said MacGopus; "your spirit I expect you will exhibit by horsewhipping the French Count; your honour you must vindicate by marrying Lady Katharine, and your sincerity you will exemplify by deserting the Parson's daughter."

"As for the horsewhipping," said George, "I make no bargain; but as for deserting the Parson's daughter, as you call her, I ——"

"Psha! light your candle and go to bed," said MacGopus; "how can you help deserting her? You have an oath—an oath at Severnstoke; and besides, you have a mother, and so has Lady Katharine. Come—come—you want rest."

"I do," said Lord Weybridge, "but your conversation is not the soother which is likely to give it me. The return to this place awakens every recollection, and recalls every tender feeling of my heart; and to think that I should have quietly abandoned all the happiness which is yet before me, if this singular turn of affairs had not brought me back to it ——"

"A little too late, my good lord," said the Doctor,—"I only warn you about your conduct to-morrow with this young lady. Commit yourself to *her*, and a pretty affair it will turn out altogether. Now recollect what you are about; and above all—for *my* sake don't spare the French Count."

It must be admitted that, however contradictory in terms, and however unpalatable in language, all that MacGopus said was perfectly and entirely true. No doubt Lady Frances had now completely arranged—not only in her own mind, but in consultation with the Duchess and her daughter—the marriage after her own heart, and was triumphing in her successful attack upon George at the most critical period of time. She knew him, and she felt secure that, after the permission he had given her to open the preliminaries to her friend, he would avoid Miss Lovell; or if he saw her, would at all events render his interview such as would at once terminate, if not her anxiety, at least her

es : more especially as he left her ladyship under the conviction that Emma's conduct could not have been justifiable under any possible circumstances."

How all these things turned out, we shall see ; for the present we have little to do but to live in expectation of decisive news of the Squire, and wish Lord Weybridge and his eccentric friend a very good night, as they wished each other, on arriving at the head of the staircase which led to their bed-rooms.

CHAPTER X.

" Where there's a will, there's a way."

OLD PROVERB.

As the reader has anticipated Lord Weybridge in the intelligence which, in the morning, reached him, of the death of the Squire, it will be needless to recur to that event farther than to mention that a note from Lovell summoned his lordship to the Hall at ten o'clock, for the purpose of arranging matters, and opening the will of the deceased, to which he had particularly directed the rector's attention, and had indeed furnished him with the key of the escrutoire in which it was deposited.

Before, however, the hour of meeting arrived, a despatch had reached Mr Lovell from Mrs Harbottle, stating not only her readiness but her anxiety to comply with her husband's desire to see her, and lamenting that the delicate state of her health—still more shaken by the unexpected news of his rapidly approaching dissolution—prevented her putting her design into execution ; that she had been suffering under a nervous depression of spirits, and that the abruptness with which her aunt had communicated the intelligence which it had been intended she should impart to her with the greatest care and caution, had brought on a fever which confined her to her bed. The rest of her letter was such as might be expected from such a person ; conveying to her wretched husband entire forgiveness as far as she herself was concerned, and deploring a catastrophe which it was evident had been accelerated by his own reckless disregard of his health and his constitution, and which, however much justified she might feel herself in having quitted him, she could not but think might have been long delayed, had her influence—

much ridiculed, yet deeply felt by him—been at hand to have checked his irregularities, and modified his intemperance.

To regret such a man—guilty of such crimes—and a martyr to such passions—would scarcely be possible; but in her gentle heart, shuddering as it did with horror at his premeditated cruelty, there still existed that unquenchable spirit of pity and compassion which a woman never ceases to feel for one with whom she has been linked by the strongest ties, next to those of nature, which mortals acknowledge. For his crimes he was to answer before a higher tribunal; for his occasional ill-treatment of herself she pardoned him; and her absence from his death-bed was really and truly, as she stated, the effect of illness she could not combat, and of feelings she could not overcome.

Before ten, Lord Weybridge was on his way to the Hall. MacGopus did not object to accompany him now; for not only was the patient dead, but the doctor gone. Dr Grover had left a note for Lord Weybridge and Mr Lovell with Popjoy, and had taken his departure almost immediately after the termination of the scene; for being pressed greatly for time, in order to get back to London, he preferred leaving the apothecary in charge at the Hall until the executors should arrive; and considered it best, as Mr Lovell had had no rest for the two preceding nights, not to have the intelligence of Harbottle's death conveyed to him until a reasonable hour in the morning, seeing that the immediate presence of the executors could be of no use, and that every necessary duty to the deceased could be performed, without needlessly disturbing them.

The morning was ushered in by the deep-toned announcement that death had done his work. The air was thick and murky, and the heavy tolling church-bell seemed muffled by the density of the atmosphere. The dependants on the departed Squire had only half opened their little shops, and groups of the inhabitants were scattered here and there detailing the particulars of the event. Yet unbreathed was the damning secret of his life, the crowning agony of his death, and there was a stillness, and a sadness, and a gloom over the place, which did honour to the feelings of those who then had known him only as a generous landlord, and a liberal customer.

At the Hall, the silence had something awful in it—the servants trod lightly along the half-darkened passages, and the only sound which broke upon the ears of George and the Doctor, as they entered the doors, was the howling of the dead man's favourite dog, which had been tied up, that he might not force his way to the room where the corpse of his once fond master lay.

ovell had arrived previously, and, conjointly with the thecary, had given such directions as were immediately necessary, and was waiting to receive his co-executor, who sent his friend the Doctor, to the worthy Rector, adding in an under tone to MacGopus, that now he had become personally acquainted with him, he hoped and trusted he would contrive to remember his name.

Soon after the arrival of his lordship, he and Lovell retired to the apartment where the will was deposited, and the doctor, having by a sort of instinctive genius hunted out the library, proceeded, as usual, to pounce upon a book, and establish himself in a corner of the little breakfast-room, where there was a fire, in order to the quiet perusal of it; which, as he had no other part to perform, and was, in his own phraseology, "only a passenger," he thought himself fully justified in doing.

There is a naval joke, pretty common amongst those of the "cloth," touching a sailor's walk. He gets leave to go ashore to take a walk, and that walk is uniformly comprized in the distance between the landing-place and the nearest public-house—so, with MacGopus; his morning-walk, let him be where he might, was extended just from the breakfast-parlour to the library; the only difference between the pursuits of the erudite surgeon, and those of his ship-mate Jack, being, that the day's pleasure of the one consisted in "pouring down," and the other, in "poring over."

According to the directions of the departed Squire, the looked-for will was found—it was short, concise, and entirely written by himself, bearing date only a few days previous to the last accession of his disorder. It contained a most ardent and unqualified eulogium upon his beloved Fanny, to whom he felt he could never sufficiently express his regrets and remorse at what had occurred to induce her departure, exonerating her from all blame, and affording, as he said, the strongest proof of his feelings towards her, by leaving her the whole of his property, real and personal, of every kind and description, with the exception of a few legacies. A thousand pounds to Miss Lovell, as a small mark of his gratitude for her conduct towards his wife. Five hundred pounds to each of the executors, and some smaller remembrances to a few of the neighbours and the servants. He left it entirely to the discretion of his wife to dispose of Binford, which, he added, for several reasons, I am inclined to think she may be disposed to do, and I make this remark upon the subject, only to relieve her mind as to any wish or feeling of mine respecting her occupancy of that place.

The minor directions, with respect to his funeral, are not

worth recording, but it must be confessed, that as a triumphant vindication of his ill-fated Fanny, nothing could be more agreeable, either to Lovell or Lord Weybridge, than the distribution of his property which he had actually made; besides, independent of their personal feelings with regard to the effect producible upon the character and respectability of one, about whom they were *both* so deeply interested, there was, in the disposition of his wealth, a strong and powerful evidence of a feeling, not only of forgiveness, but of repentance, which offered the only atonement in his power, for an act, the result of violent and diabolical passion, unsoothed by religion, and untempered by principle.

It was clear to Lord Weybridge, that with any thing like a show of decency, he could not quit Binford until after the funeral, nor indeed until such communications had been received from the widow, as might regulate their conduct in the execution of the trust which had devolved upon them. Lovell suggested, that if Lord Weybridge would so far condescend, he ought, if possible, to make a visit to Mrs Harbottle, at Mopeham. But his lordship, who was in his heart anxious to stay where he was, pleaded the circumstances of her serious illness, as an objection to this plan. However, upon consulting the Doctor, MacGopus, who really acted Mentor to the life, expressed his opinion, of course, in direct opposition to that of his noble friend, he being beyond all things anxious to keep him away from the society of his Calypso, in which he was quite sure, to use his own phrase, he would, sooner or later, make "a *Tom-noddy*" of himself.

Lovell declared that nothing but his own infirmities would prevent his making the journey, but that certainly he could not take the liberty of urging his lordship to the fatigue of the expedition.

"The fatigue will do him good," said MacGopus.

"But what time will it occupy?" asked his lordship.

"Not so much time, as must, for decency sake, elapse between this and the funeral."

"Well," said Lord Weybridge, "I certainly did not anticipate such an undertaking—I confess I should be most happy to pay every proper attention to Mrs Harbottle, and if you consider, either as a matter of duty, it would be right, or as a matter of courtesy, civil to go, I am off—especially if you think, that in her present state of health, a more abrupt communication of the contents of the will, or the necessity of a correspondence, would excite or agitate her too much."

"You're a good fellow, George," said MacGopus, to the infinite astonishment of the Rector, who was not, of course,

ware of the connexion which had so long subsisted between our Telemachus, and the Kish-like sage, who so familiarly accosted him.

"It will, indeed, be very kind of his lordship," added Lovell.

"Say no more, say no more," said Lord Weybridge. "You'll go with me, Doctor? and we will start forthwith. Is Miss Lovell visible?" said his lordship, to Lovell.

"Indeed is she, and will be glad, I am sure, if you would take charge of any letter or packet which she may wish to send to her friend."

"If the Rectory is in the road," said MacGopus, "you can call on your way."

"Your suggestion is prophetic—it is in the road," said Lord Weybridge. "I should think an hour will suffice for preparation—I must write to my mother before my departure, and perhaps, my dear sir, you will complete whatever directions are necessary here, and at one we will be at your door."

"This is, indeed, most kind and generous, my lord," said the Rector: "it is a severe duty imposed upon you, but —"

"Oh, not a word," said George; "we'll be in time, depend upon it."

Saying which, Lord Weybridge and the Doctor quitted the house of mourning, and proceeded to Dale Cottage, his lordship being everywhere received with marked respect from his neighbours, whose faces, however, it was not very probable he should often, if ever, see again.

When they reached home, two letters from Severnstoke awaited them, both from Lady Frances, which, as they may serve to illustrate the progress of our history, shall be submitted to the reader.

The first, to Lord Weybridge.

"Severnstoke, Tuesday.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—Your sudden departure hence, has thrown a sad gloom over us—we are, however, in hourly expectation of your return. It seems, from what we have heard, that Mr Harbottle is in a most dangerous state, and if so, as you can have no cause for remaining after your interview with him, you will of course join us as soon as possible.

"It is impossible to describe to you how beautifully dear Lady Katharine conducts herself—after what has been communicated to her with regard to your sentiments, of course her situation is painful and delicate, but she feels that you are performing a duty, and although it is impossible not to perceive how deeply she is affected by your absence, yet the

way in which she bears up is so amiable, so little selfish and so extremely natural, that I have conceived a higher opinion of her mind and character, than even I had previously formed. The Duchess is quite charmed with the prospect—she is a dear amiable creature, and I am sure if anything were wanting to complete the excellence of her character, her conduct as a mother would alone be necessary. I assure you we should all be in the highest possible spirits if you were back—we very much miss the dear Doctor, who is, in truth, a worthy creature, and as being one of your sincerest and oldest friends, doubly valuable to me.

“I cannot rest without writing to you, to tell you how we desire your return. If you should see any of our neighbours pray remember me kindly to them. I have written to the Doctor from myself.

“Ever yours, dear George, affectionately,

“FRANCES SHERINGHAM.”

This was a decided refresher—one of those gentle jogs to the memory which are seldom pleasant, and which never could have arrived more inopportunely. George's answer, however, was as little agreeable to Lady Frances as her letter was to him; he wrote hastily to tell her of the necessity he felt himself under of going to Mopeham officially. That he could not leave Binford until after the funeral, and above all, he told her that the confession of Harbottle had entirely overthrown every imputation upon the character of his widow, and consequently those which had been cast upon Miss Lovell, winding up this disappointing epistle by informing her ladyship, that they were engaged to take luncheon at the Rectory in their way out of Binford. He begged his compliments to the Duchess and Lady Katharine, and took no further notice of the allusions to the excellence of the noble mother or the amiability of her Right Honourable daughter, and having sealed the despatch, inquired of MacGopus what his exemplary parent had communicated to him.

But MacGopus was a man of honour, and he declined answering his noble friend's question, and denied him in such a calm provoking way, that George was driven to the last pitch of anger, when the Doctor with the same tranquillity which characterized all the rest of his proceedings, threw the much desired epistle into the fire.

Its contents consisted of an exhortation to the Doctor to keep George out of the snares of the Lovells, to impress upon his mind how serious his engagement was to Lady Katharine, and how seriously she considered it; and above all, to take every fair and proper advantage of the presence

of Count Montenay to excite and influence her son's jealousy, striving, if possible, to prevent any confidential conversation between him and Emma, and, at all events, to hurry him back to his house and visitors as speedily as possible.

MacGopus could have had but two reasons for not permitting Lord Weybridge to read this letter. One on his own peculiar principle of action, because his lordship particularly wished to read it, and the other, because he was resolved, that let him act as he might during the critical period of their absence from Severnstoke, he would not appear to his lordship to take instructions, or act under any superior influence. The doctor was far from denying the correctness of what Lady Frances said, nor did he demur to the propriety of her endeavours to extricate her son from the trammels of Miss Lovell, whose merits and beauties, as he had not yet seen her, he could by no means appreciate; and to whose criminality, as he considered it, in having "taken up" with a French Count, stood so prominently forward in the list of her faults, that it was scarcely with common patience he could listen to the praises which George was still perpetually bestowing on her, certain as he was at the moment, that he would be forced eventually to surrender all hopes of possessing her as a wife.

The time drew nigh when the eyes of MacGopus were to be feasted with the sight of this rural beauty, and that too under an impression of sorrow and of sadness—and fascinating as loveliness may be in all the glow of health, and all the brilliancy of high spirits, to one who could estimate the feelings of Emma's heart, the look of grief, and the character of pity and distress, could not fail to add new charms to her sweetly expressive countenance.

"I suppose," said MacGopus, as the carriage drove up to the door, "we shall see this Johnny Crapaud?"

"I *will* see him," said Lord Weybridge, "upon that point I am resolved—by the bye, let us walk on, it is not worth while getting into the chariot for so short a distance—let them pack the carriage and bring it to the Parsonage.

"A very good notion," said the Doctor.

"Come then—don't be long," said his lordship to Roberts and the other people, "in half an hour we shall be ready to start—*Allons donc*." Saying which, he put his arm into that of MacGopus, and stepped out with a steadyish step, but a fluttering heart, to the humble home of his beloved, his almost betrothed Emma.

"I think this visit indiscreet," said MacGopus.

"Not to make it would be rude and barbarous," replied Lord Weybridge.

VOL. II.—H

"Better to be rude and barbarous outright, than be kind in appearance and barbarous in reality."

"I have no intention to be barbarous."

"Consider," said the Doctor, "you have read Lady Frances's letter—does not that corroborate all I have said?"

"Am I not my own master?"

"No, you have delegated your authority."

"But my faith is plighted here."

"No such thing, you never spoke to the girl upon the subject."

"But I opened my heart to her dearest friend."

"Since which you have openly neglected her—admitted her misconduct—consented to marry another—while she, on the other hand, has accepted your *congé*, and engaged herself, for all you know, to a Frenchman."

"Oh hang that," said George; "however, the moment of trial is at hand; of course if *that* should be the case I have only to take my hat and go."

"You must do that if it should not be the case," said the doctor.

"Hush!—we are there," said his lordship.

"No, we are not, we are here," said the Doctor.

"Well, so be it;" said his lordship, "it is vastly lucky you will condescend to admit that we are any where."

A loud ring at the bell summoned the servant to the gates, and the visitors entered the pretty grounds of the Parsonage. They reached the house-door, and the servant preceding, Lord Weybridge and the Doctor led the way to the Rector's library, where they found him occupied in writing to Mrs Harbottle, as was his daughter, he said, in her boudoir. George felt much more agitated than he had expected, and a sort of faintness came over him, which induced him, after MacGopus had seated himself, to quit the room, which was excessively warm, for the drawing-room, where the fire was less and the space larger.

"Don't let me interrupt you, sir," said MacGopus to Mr Lovell, "I can find occupation while you are writing."

George strolled to the window; and looked to the lawn, which, being studded and fringed with evergreens, had still, during the gleams of sunshine, the appearance of summer. A thousand recollections flashed into his mind at the sight of this once familiar scene, and the varied events of the last eight-and-forty hours, combined in imagination with those which would probably occur during the next similar period of time, had abstracted him from surrounding objects, when the gentle voice of his beloved Emma—for so she was—aroused him from the painful reverie in which he was absorbed.

"My dearest Emma, is it you," said his lordship, "how I rejoice again to see you." At the same moment clasping both her hands in his, and drawing her towards him in all the warmth of friendship.

"What a dreadful cause of meeting," said Emma, who, in the naturalness of her character, delighted as she was, to behold the only man who, according to her own admission, had ever interested her, first thought of her unhappy friend, "and how kind, how very kind of you to consent to take this long and tiresome journey."

"Fanny is *your* friend," said Lord Weybridge, "and that of itself would be a sufficient reason for my sacrificing any little personal convenience to her service; but besides it is my duty, and we sailors have a strong idea of the obligations of duty. But tell me, Emma, are you yourself quite well?"

"Yes," said or rather sighed Emma; "I am well, but really these frequently repeated trials upon the spirits do us more injury than all the bodily ills to which we are subject."

"You have not been suffering mentally?" said George tenderly.

"Indeed, indeed I have," said Emma; "the separation of Fanny from her husband—my association with her in her flight—the consequences of that expedition, as far as the gossip of the neighbourhood can affect me, and the constant agitation and excitement under which I laboured till I knew the dreadful cause of her flight, which I have only been acquainted with since my father's return from the Hall, have preyed upon me and made me wretched."

"Were *you* ignorant of the dreadful history?"

"Totally, and the circumstance itself, as it turns out, added to the pain I felt, and increased the doubts with which I had to contend, during our journey, and during my stay with Fanny; for whenever poor Charles Harvey's name was mentioned, her agitation so visibly increased, that I could not—and perhaps it was not unnatural—divest myself of the idea that she had somehow committed herself with him, and that I had been made a dupe in the part I took between them. How many many pardons do I now require from her for my base and ungenerous suspicion. Still I think I might have been trusted."

"However, your triumph and consolation are now at hand," said his lordship—"my message to her will set all that matter right, and you will again rejoice without qualification, in the noble course you have pursued. But tell me, Emma, did Fanny convey my message to you; that, which I entrusted to her when I was here and you were absent?"

Emma blushed deeply, and trembled exceedingly. George took her hand; she gently, but not angrily, withdrew it.

"Don't ask me," said Emma; "this is not a time to speak on such subjects. We are here in the midst of death and distress, and you—you since that period have been prejudiced against me. Some other day we will talk of it—at present let us confine ourselves to the sad business which must be transacted, and which you are so kind as to undertake."

"But Emma," said George, forgetting his mother, the Duchess, Lady Katharine, and even the French Count into the bargain; "she *did* deliver that message."

Emma bowed her head assentingly.

"And has any thing since occurred to induce you to decide against the petition it contained?"

She blushed still deeper, and strove to take her hand from his, which held it; her silence was followed by a tear, which stole down her cheek. Then it was that the truth flashed into his mind—then all the horrors of jealousy struck into his brain—the history of the French Count was all too true! The object he had in view, by pressing the question before his departure for Mopeham, was a most important one; if he could ascertain that the message he had sent had been delivered, and if Emma had acceded to his solicitations, he resolved, during the week of absence from home, to open the real state of his heart to his mother, and lay the blame of precipitancy upon her who had excited hopes and expectations on the part of the Duchess and Lady Katharine, which his commission to her ladyship did not certainly warrant. The truth is, that at the moment he gave her the permission to open the subject, he believed Emma to have transgressed the commonest and most observed rules of society; he now saw her exonerated, and free from the imputation; his love was as strong as ever, and he resolved to abide by the resolution which he had made when he was able to judge her character fairly, and not suffer himself to be the victim of an alteration in that resolution, made under a totally false impression.

The trembling, blushing, and weeping, however, awakened in his restless and sensitive mind, the new and still more dreadful suspicion of the Count's ascendancy; he checked his anxiety to inquire about him; he would not exhibit himself in the character of a jealous lover, but he was more than ever resolved to see and judge for himself, how far his apprehensions were well grounded.

"Pray, pray," said Emma, "do not press this conversation to-day; we have much to think of for poor Fanny in her new position. Your own kind, generous heart, will tell you that we should devote our thoughts to her. Do let us join my father, and consider what would be her best course,

for I very much fear that her health is so delicate that it will be impossible for her to leave her present residence for some time.

"At your bidding," said George, convinced that her heart was otherwise disposed of, "I will be as mute as the grave; we shall meet again on my return, for I have decided to remain here till after the funeral, and then, Emma—"

"Come, come, Captain Sheringham," said Emma—"Lord Weybridge, I mean—remember your promise, come into the Library.

She led the way, and George followed her implicitly, with his eyes fixed upon her, in a stupor of doubt and apprehension, scarce knowing where he was going.

"Papa," said Emma, opening the door, and instantly tarting back at seeing a stranger, "I—beg pardon—"

"It is only my particular friend Dr MacGopus," said Lord Weybridge, "who will be delighted to have the honour of making your acquaintance, and of contradicting every thing you may venture to advance from this day forward."

MacGopus was near sighted, but he saw the sort of reproachful look which Emma gave his lordship, and satisfied himself that whatever the Frenchman was, he had not quite succeeded in driving his lordship out of the heart of the Parson's daughter.

"You must not believe Lord Weybridge," said MacGopus? "he always gives his best friends the worst character."

"I have ordered them to put luncheon in the dining-room," said Miss Lovell to her father.

A saying which much rejoiced George, because, as he knew the Count was domesticated in the house, he felt convinced that he would "show" at luncheon; or at least, if he did not, he should set it down as an *affaire finie*, and that being the accepted lover, and consequently intended husband of Emma, it was considered more delicate to keep him out of sight.

Emma here proceeded to enter into conversation with her father, and speedily Lord Weybridge was called into council.

"We make no apology to you," said Mr Lovell, addressing MacGopus, "ours is really business, and with much to do we have but little time."

"Not a word, sir, not a word," said the Doctor, who re-seated himself in the leathern chair by the fire, and began to read again; but, had there been any body to watch the venerable sly-boots, he would have perceived that he was not quite so devoted to his book as he ordinarily was; he kept his keen black eyes glancing away from the page to the face

of the young lady, who was looking lovely beyond description ; and as he saw the heads of the consulting two, brought near each other, across the table, he did not fail to observe that the fair curls of the sweet girl were remarkably near the black whiskers of his noble friend, and that his lordship did neither start nor draw back from an approximation which, it must be confessed, could not but have been extremely agreeable to him.

"Here'll be Old Nick to pay," thought MacGopus ; "it is all over—this must be the girl ; I wish I was well out of it : but what is it to me—I'm only a passenger." And so he laid down his book—drew forth a huge round snuff-box—rapped the lid, as was his custom—opened it—took a glorious pinch—shut the box—restored it to his pocket—and took up his book again.

The conversation had continued for nearly half an hour, and the carriage had been at the door some time, when luncheon was announced. MacGopus, who did not comprehend the motives which Lord Weybridge had for stopping, but attributing his desire to partake of the repast to his anxiety for enjoying another half hour of Emma's society, pressed him to go off without eating ; but Emma, in retiring to her own room to seal her letter to Fanny, entreated the Doctor to stop, in a tone so winning, that the stoic himself was melted, and he withdrew all further opposition to the delay.

When Emma was gone, and Lovell just concluding his despatches, Lord Weybridge led MacGopus into the drawing-room.

"You know why I stay luncheon?"

"No."

"To see the Frenchman, he is in the house, I know."

"Ugh ! I don't think that's all of it —"

"Hush !"

Emma having returned, charged his lordship with her packet, and Lovell, having completed his communication, enclosed the will itself, and delivered it to Lord Weybridge, and thus having completed all the business essential to the journey, and Emma having again reverted to the horrid circumstances connected with the whole affair, and her fears of Fanny's health, they proceeded to the room where luncheon was laid—Mr Lovell, assisted by the Doctor and George, breaking through his usual custom, by proceeding to join them.

They reached the dining parlour—the table was laid for five persons. George looked at MacGopus—he seated himself next to Emma. MacGopus placed himself on the other side of her ; she appeared discomposed and somewhat fidgetty, as if she expected some other person who ought to sit there—she said nothing, but began doing the honours.

George, who saw all this manœuvring, became not a little irritated, and anxious to bring the affair to a crisis, said "By-the-bye, here stands Banquo's chair, whom do you expect here?"

"Oh!" said Lovell, "only the Count—he'll be here I dare say in a minute. I believe," added he, "Dr MacGopus, you have committed a sort of treason against my daughter—you have unwittingly usurped the Count's place next to her."

This confirmed all the worst suspicions which George had entertained.

"I beg pardon, sir," said the Doctor, "I'll move down—make way for my superiors."

"What Count—is—this?" said George.

"Count Montenay," said Emma, "hav'n't you heard of him? he has been staying here now for some time."

A servant having entered the room with some new dish, Emma continued her speech by inquiring where the Count was?

"He is coming directly, Miss," said the man.

"Oh dear," said Emma, evidently deeply interested about him; "open the drawing-room doors; he can come that way, it will save him the trouble of going round."

Her solicitude was not lost upon either Lord Weybridge or MacGopus.

"Come, come," said Emma, in a bewitching tone of sweetness, to the approaching but yet invisible stranger.

The servant threw open the battants, and in bounded a beautiful boy, of about nine years old, with his hair all about his ears, and a hoop over his shoulder.

"Who is *this*?" said Lord Weybridge.

"Oh!" said Emma, "I must present you in due form. That, Alexis, is Lord Weybridge; this, my Lord, is my darling, Count Alexis Montenay."

"Ugh!" said MacGopus, looking at George with an expression wholly indescribable.

"That Count Montenay?" said George.

"Yes," said Emma. "Oh!—come then, you *have* heard of him before—isn't he a dear little fellow?"

"I assure you," said Lovell, "that when I am forced to send him to school I shall be most sadly vexed; he is a good boy, and I have grown as fond of him as if he were my own."

"He was my companion all the way from Mopeham," said Emma, "and is my companion always now."

And then she began filling his plate with all the things she knew he liked best, and patted his hair, and patted his cheek, and drew his chair to the table, and divested him of his hoop, and did all she could to make the dear nice little child comfortable.

"Doctor," said Lord Weybridge, "I think we must start; we shall be late on the road."

"And a dull, dull road it is," said Emma; "however, you will of course sleep by the way."

"I put myself under the guidance of the Doctor," said George, whose eyes remained fixed upon the unconscious child in a sort of amazement. Say any thing about the protracted error in which he had been living, he neither could nor would; and all his anxiety now was to get away, so that the Doctor and he might give full scope to their self-malediction for their remarkable credulity and supereminent innocence, in never having thought it worth the trouble to ascertain what might be the age of the redoubtable French Count, who had caused so much mischief, and occasioned so much speculation.

Emma who, with all her apparent quietude was as quick as lightning, saw in a moment that something connected with the boy had affected both her guests. She could not, certainly, anticipate or imagine that kindness and attention displayed to an orphan child had been misinterpreted or misrepresented into a flirtation, or an attachment, or something even worse, but she was conscious that her little favourite had somehow or another made a sensation. The visitors tacitly agreed that any explanation would tell considerably against their own wisdom and judgment, and accordingly hurried their departure, and in less than ten minutes after the appearance of the boy, they were snugly seated in Lord Weybridge's carriage, having taken a kind and affectionate leave of the Rectory, and, as the Doctor thought, as far as his lordship was concerned, a particularly affectionate leave of the Parson's daughter.

CHAPTER XI.

"He was a man
That liv'd up to the standard of his honour,
And prized that jewel more than mines of wealth."

OTWAY.

"WELL, Doctor," said Lord Weybridge, pulling up the carriage window, "the Count's story is a bit of a botch."

"Eh!—you might have taken the trouble to inquire his age, before you deserted your sweet-heart upon his account," said the consoling Doctor.

"To be sure, how calumnies and falsehoods prevail," said

George. "Poor Emma!—the kindly affection for an orphan child, to be perverted into a flirtation with a gallant, gay Lothario!"

"Have you been putting your foot in it again George?" said MacGopus—"renewing your suit—blowing the ashes—"

"Pooh!" replied his lordship, "Emma interdicted any conversation on the subject."

"Very judicious too," said MacGopus. "No doubt the same communicative friends from whom you derived your intelligence about the Count, have been favouring her with the details of your affair with Lady Katharine."

"An affair of which I am resolved to hear no more myself," said George. "If I have been induced, under the influence of falsehood and misrepresentation, to abandon the only being with whom I could be happy, and to violate a pledge solemnly and seriously given, I contend that the moment I am undeceived, and the accused sufferer is exonerated from blame and reproach, the acts which I have committed under that erroneous impression are nullified; and the promises I may have made, or the permission I may have given, are utterly annihilated."

"You have heard the Scottish song, George," said MacGopus—

"It is well to be off with the old love,
Before you are on with the new."

"I don't think the Duchess—or her daughter—or her son—if it were referred to him, would see the case exactly in the light in which you see it. You have allowed your mother to make the match, and she has done it; and as for your backing out of it, I'll tell you you can't. I told you you never would have this Emma, and you never will."

"At all events, if they have hooked me," said Lord Weybridge, "I will show them some sport in landing me. I shall make a few struggles and flounderings, and the first evolution I shall perform will be writing to my mother from the place at which we may decide upon dining, and stating to her the exact position in which I am placed, and how entirely my happiness, as well as my honour, will be jeopardized by abandoning Miss Lovell."

"I would not do any such thing," said the Doctor; "it will only expose you to their observation, and can do no good."

"And I am quietly to sit down a miserable man for life. Oh! what would I give that the infernal black-sided ship would not run down my poor uncle's yacht, and that I was again the plain George Sheringham I was, without title or

fortune, proud and happy to share my splendid half-pay with Emma."

"Where's the use of wishing?" said MacGopus; "besides for all your pining and whining, you like playing Lord as well as your neighbours: so let us talk of something else—I'm sick of your love story."

Lord Weybridge and the Doctor made out the journey tolerably. They quarrelled four or five times, and were of course reconciled as often. George put into execution his design of writing to his mother, and having pursued their route, the travellers reached Mopeham in the middle of the next day, having slept where they dined.

Lord Weybridge's proceedings after his arrival are so fully detailed in a letter which he despatched to his colleague, the Rector, that a perusal of that document will render any other description of them unnecessary.

"Mopeham, Nov. 18, 1830.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I arrived here about one o'clock; and having transacted the most important part of my business, sit down to report progress for your information. I very much regret to state that I found our poor friend, Mrs Harbottle, dreadfully ill—worse, indeed, than I had anticipated, even after your account. I very much fear that consumption is already far advanced. A few weeks have made a more extraordinary alteration in her appearance than you can imagine; and the shock which the intelligence of her husband's hopeless situation, delivered abruptly by her aunt, who is a most extraordinary person, has completely broken her down—in truth, I think her position miserable, and I have strongly recommended, if she can bear the journey, to change the scene as soon as possible. She seems earnestly to desire to see Miss Lovell; but of course I dare not second her wishes, knowing, as I do, how indispensable to your comfort and happiness her presence is at the Rectory.

"Mrs Harbottle, immediately on the arrival of the express from her husband, soliciting her to come to him, started to fulfil his desire; but at the end of the first stage it was found wholly impossible for her to continue the journey, and she was compelled to return.

"She has expressed her positive resolution never to visit Binford. She was dreadfully agitated when I read the will to her, and she found herself the possessor of the whole of her late husband's immense fortune. Of course it is not possible for me to attract her attention at this moment to minor details, but it is evident to me that she will sell the Binford property, and the house and furniture as it stands, for she expresses something like horror at the idea of seeing

ny thing which can be associated in her mind with the events which have recently occurred in that place. I regret the determination to which I clearly see she will come upon this point, because I think the intimacy which would subsist between her and Miss Lovell, if she again took up her residence at the Hall, would be agreeable and even advantageous to both.

"I have promised to remain here till to-morrow afternoon, in order to give Mrs Harbottle time to rally her strength, so as to endure a second conversation upon business. I have already explained to her, as briefly as possible, the arrangements we have made with respect to the funeral, of which she entirely approves.

"I do assure you, I never have seen a more interesting and melancholy picture of human suffering than she exhibits; and as I have before said, the weakness and littleness of mind so predominant in the character of Miss Jarman are ill calculated to sooth or mitigate her sufferings. The sight of me, associated as I was in her thoughts with our unfortunate friend Harvey, connected as he is in her memory with the terrible revenge of her rash and desperate husband, affected her dreadfully, and I almost regretted that I had undertaken the mission. However, she now bears to speak of past events, and with care and attention, might rally;—if she has not these, my firm opinion is, that her days are numbered.

"I have much more to communicate, and shall have more till, when we have had our second conversation to-morrow; but it will be as useless for you to answer this, as it will be needless for me to write again, for your letter would cross me on the road, and I shall be at Binford myself before any letter from me could reach you.

"Pray make my kindest remembrances to Miss Lovell—for whom I shall have a packet from Mrs Harbottle; and believe me, my dear sir, "Your's, most faithfully,

"WEYBRIDGE."

On the day following that on which Lord Weybridge despatched this, he had according to previous arrangement, a long interview with the suffering widow, who appeared to agree with him in thinking change of scene would be serviceable to her,—if, as she added, her life was worth preserving; but that without a companion who suited her, and one with whom she could freely talk of by-gone days and circumstances, even that experiment would be of doubtful effect. She again glanced at the possibility of securing Emma, for a long visit, and seemed particularly struck with a suggestion of Lord Weybridge, that as she had resolved not to re-visit Binford, she might engage not only Emma,

but her father, on a visit to her at some other place, by which means the objection he had to be left without his daughter might be overcome, and his duty devolving upon his curate during his absence, the variation of scene and circumstance might have also a salutary effect upon him.

Fanny had been so short a time in her new situation, that when Lord Weybridge first made the proposition of her removal to some sea watering-place, habit so preponderated, that she felt as if she were unable to decide upon any measure of such a nature without referring to some other authority; she had not become accustomed to the independence of the wealthy widow; and such is human nature, and such the inherent kindness of woman's heart, that hateful as her husband had rendered himself by his odious and cold-blooded destruction of a fellow-creature, she could not think of her own position without weeping for days that were gone, and mingling in her sorrow for the destruction of a fabric of domestic happiness, which once looked brightly, remorse and repentance for the share which she attributed to herself in its overthrow and downfall.

Lord Weybridge had entered upon the duties of executorship with a warmth and earnestness, which, however amiable and friendly in their appearance, were, if truth could be entirely known, in no small degree attributable to the desire he felt of making occupation for himself, and giving a plausible reason for his protracted absence from Severnstoke. Of Emma he spoke to Fanny, as much as he felt himself allowed to do, under the peculiar circumstances in which the widow was placed. She, however, told him, that she had faithfully fulfilled the commission with which she was entrusted, and that certainly the manner in which Emma had received the communication fully corroborated all she had said to him upon the subject of her feelings, and entirely fulfilled the expectations she had formed of her answer.

It was clear that Fanny rallied from her own overwhelming sorrow in order to cheer Lord Weybridge with the prospect which was opened before him of happiness, with the only woman, as he himself had said, who could ensure it. Little did she think that every word she spoke was a dagger to his heart—for although he made a point of running down the doubts and overcoming the obstacles which MacGopus appeared so charmed to create and establish in the way of his felicity, the Doctor had succeeded more than George would admit to him, in establishing the obligations under which he lay with regard to Lady Katharine.

On their return homewards Mac Gopus, whose sense of honour was nice, and whose feelings upon such points were rigidly conscientious, went more minutely than ever into

the discussion with his noble friend, and begged him by all that was sacred, and by every hope he had of comfort himself, to undeceive Miss Lovell upon the subject of their probable union. "Tell her," said MacGopus, "every fact connected with the affair—explain to her how you have been deceived with regard to her—show how her now proved exemplary conduct, with respect to her friend, has been misrepresented and misinterpreted, and let yourself down sufficiently low to admit your jealousy of a fine boy of eight years and a half old—vindicate your conduct in the best way you can—palliate the turn you have been induced to take; but, for God's sake, don't leave the innocent girl to live a life of hope and expectation, which can never be fulfilled, and the frustration of which she will read in the published account of your marriage with another woman."

The firm tone and unflinching remonstrances of the Doctor most assuredly had their effect,—indeed George had at one time felt very much inclined to make Fanny his confidante, and confess to her the situation in which he was placed, or rather had placed himself; but he was checked in this instance by the recollection, that, in making the explanation, he must have admitted a belief that her abdication of Binford was not untinctured with impropriety, and that Emma's participation in her flight was the grand pivot upon which his mother had contrived to turn the whole question.

From Miss Jarman the Doctor had taken the most bitter aversion—nor did Miss Budd please him much better; but he was charmed with Fanny, and certainly, if she had been in a more approachable state of mind, would have saved Lord Weybridge the trouble of stating his own case, with regard to the Parson's daughter. As it was, he merely threw in a word or two, when in the evening the widow came for a short time into the drawing-room, and satisfied himself with the hope of being able to convert George to his way of thinking on the road home.

Fanny's gratitude to Lord Weybridge for his kindness and consideration was unbounded, and the thing of all others that he would most have delighted to do, would have been to invite her and the Lovells to Severnstoke; indeed he went the length of sounding the Doctor as to the possibility of such a measure, which while it might be the most agreeable to himself, might be the most decisive to others.

"Pooh!" said MacGopus, with a sort of Johnsonian manner which he sometimes did not disdain to affect. "Psha?—a murderer's widow packed up with a duke's wife, and a Parson's daughter pitted against a duchess's darling—madness—no—no—be wise—be prudent—the fol-

lies you have committed you cannot recall—die like *Cæsar* with decency.”

“*Et tu Brute!*” said Lord Weybridge, “why that is the most unkindest cut of all.—If Emma, whom with your Scotch-Kirk bigotry you call a Parson’s daughter is not fit to be pitted, as you term it, with a duchess’s daughter, she is not fit I conclude in your estimation to be a peer’s wife.”

“Oh!” said MacGopus, affecting a profound humility; “I beg your lordship’s pardon—I see I have touched the chord—but it is an unlucky twang I have given, for you have just said what you imagine I inferred, and what your mother most decidedly declares. The Parson’s daughter is not fit for the peer’s wife.”

“MacGopus,” said his lordship, pale with rage; “I can bear your infernal, placid, obstinacy as well as any man, better than any man, because I know when one suffers a bear to play fly-catcher, he must compound for occasional ugly pats; but you have touched a point where I admit I am not only vulnerable but sore—what do you mean by the cant of a Parson’s daughter—a clergyman is essentially a gentleman.”

“I beg your pardon,” said MacGopus, “what d’ye think of the fellow who ———”

“There are exceptions to all general rules,” said Lord Weybridge, “I am not going to wait for you to pick out of the whole mass of English clergy, one or two, or one or two and twenty black sheep. I say, and I maintain it, that collectively, there does not exist upon the face of the earth such a body of piety, intelligence, education, and good conduct as the clergy of the Church of England—look at their families—visit their houses—watch their pursuits—trace their amusements—scrutinize their duties—whence then can a man select a wife with a greater chance of happiness and comfort than from the domestic circle of such an individual as Lovell, or from the circles of hundreds like him in the same sacred profession.”

“You are all wrong depend upon it,” said the Doctor, “Miss Lovell, or whatever you call her, is an ornament in her own sphere—shines like a jewel—but it is in the dark, or when darkness is made just visible—she would not do at Severnstoke—she would not do in Grosvenor Square.”

“Virtue, modesty, talent, and ingenuousness, will do every where,” said George.

“Aye, aye—so you say now ———”

“Am I not ready to marry her—prove my words, and —”

“You can’t marry her I tell you,” said the Doctor, with the provoking immoveability from his point, which irritated George beyond measure; “it is not for the sake of running

with the girl I talk, but to reconcile you to the separation which must take place between you."

"I certainly," said George, in explanation, "do not mean to put Emma Lovell in competition with Lady Katharine's showy accomplishments and ease of manners."

"Why not," said MacGopus, "her manner is a great deal more agreeable, and I hate a show woman."

"Why, mercy on me," said his lordship, "this instant I told me, or at least inferred, that I should be ashamed to call Emma as a wife."

"Quite the contrary—proud of her as a wife—but ——"

"Faith, I cannot talk with you, as my mother says, you are both hot and cold in the same breath."

"I am constant to one point.—You must undeceive the ladies as to the possibility of your marrying her, or I shall."

"You!—what in the name of fate or fortune have you to say with it."

"I shall protect her; her father is old, and kind, and kind, and patient, and thinks you a Phoenix of perfection. I will not suffer you to play with her feelings."

"Nor," said Lord Weybridge, "will I suffer you to interfere with my conduct."

"So be it, my lord," said MacGopus, "we shall soon stop changing horses. I'll trouble your servant for my portmanteau and bag, and pack myself on the outside of the next stage coach that comes, or walk my way up to London if it be necessary; but I never will be a pander to your folly or your vices, and most assuredly not permit the peace of an innocent and unworldly creature like this Parson's daughter, to be disturbed and ruined by you. You must not marry her—you know you cannot—and you shall not make her fancy that you can."

The storm had now reached its height, and George took the ordinary course of remaining silent; the real fact was, he did not regard his engagement to Lady Katharine in so serious a light as the Doctor did, probably, because he was not quite so calm, or so much in the possession of his reasoning faculties as the Doctor was, at the time that he made Lady Frances his accredited agent to the Duchess.

As for the resolution of the Doctor to interfere, he was not so certain if he once seriously made it, he would as surely put it into execution, and therefore, instead of flying into violent bursts of passion, or attempting to divert him from his design, he soothed him into good temper, and a consent to continue the partner of his journey, by agreeing with him that something ought to be done, but that he felt as if he would better open his heart, and develop the state of his circumstances to the Rector himself than to his daughter.

To this alteration of person, the Doctor advanced no objection, and the journey was performed with safety and perfect harmony. MacGopus entirely agreeing with his companion, that Mrs Harbottle ought to have some favourite and agreeable friend as a companion, and that nobody would be, if it could be so managed, half so suitable as Emma; at the same time the Doctor, with one of his cunning looks and shrugs of his shoulders, declared his belief that it would be a work of impossibility to save the life of the widow, and that, therefore, it became a more urgent duty of those who were attached to her, to soothe and console her in her progress towards another and a better world.

George was altogether upset by the mission he had undertaken—the sight of his so recently blooming and lovely friend—the unexpected death, and still more unexpected confession of the Squire, and the consciousness of his own credulity in believing the report which had been circulated about Emma, superadded to his return to Binford, and a renewal of his acquaintance at the Rectory, were, in fact, too much for him to bear.

It must be said, however, to the honour of his lordship, that he bowed to the dictates of the worthy Doctor, and pledged his honour to come to such an explanation as should clearly and distinctly undeceive Miss Lovell as to any immediate hope of the fulfilment of what he nevertheless still held to be a sacred and binding promise.

It was not to be supposed, that all the passages of their existence at Binford, and the proceedings at the Hall were to remain unknown or unnoticed at Severnstoke. Lady Frances had condescended to instruct her maid to enter into a correspondence with Plush and his favourite at Dale Cottage, and thence derive another version of the state of affairs from that which the principal actors in them might choose to convey; but these underhanded proceedings produced her ladyship very little gratification, and indeed very little intelligence, for George, in his letters, had been as explicit as any man could be, with regard to his feelings about Emma, and had spoken so plainly and strongly that nothing but the impossibility of leaving the Duchess and Lady Katharine would have prevented Lady Frances from hurrying over to Binford, to condole with dear Miss Lovell and support her during the period in which her “excellent papa” was destined to be worried with the details of business.

Pen and ink, however, she had at command, and she did not fail to avail herself of the advantages derivable from their use, and although she was hindered from flying on the wings of friendship to visit her dear young friend, she took care that the following amiable and affectionate letter borne from,

rather than on, the "gray goose wing," should reach Miss Lovell the very day after her dear son's departure for Mopeham.

"*Severnstoke, Nov. —, 1830.*

"MY DEAR MISS LOVELL,—Although I am a good deal hurried with visitors, and a hundred little arrangements which occupy my time, I cannot avoid writing a few lines to you, to tell you how very much I feel for your situation, and of that of your dear and excellent father.

"With respect to our poor friend, Mr Harbottle, as I never possessed any very great admiration of his qualities or character, it would be affectation to pretend to any serious regret for his death, which is rendered less afflicting, although not less awful, by the circumstances connected with it; but I cannot express to you how truly I sympathize with poor dear Mrs Harbottle, and with you naturally; your kindness to her has been extraordinary, and her gratitude must be no doubt proportionate; and I do hope that you will continue to give her as much of your society in her present bereaved state, as you are able.

"I suppose she will return to Binford; for your sake, if for no other reason, and I shall hope to meet her when I return to the cottage, and shall most gladly add my endeavours to yours to support her in her sorrow, and check a disposition to melancholy and regret, which if what I hear can possibly be true, ought not to weigh upon her mind too heavily.

"Of course you have seen dear George—I am sure he could not be at Binford many hours without making you a visit. The affair of Mr Harbottle's death comes rather *mal apropos*, for it takes him away from home at a moment when his presence here is most essentially necessary. I dare say he will not tell any body at Binford the real truth—so I will mention it—*entre nous*—to you. He is engaged to be married to Lady Katharine Hargrave, a daughter of the Duchess of Malvern;—I say of the Duchess, because the poor Duke has been dead several years;—she is every thing I could wish in a daughter-in-law, and he could aspire to, as a wife. She is devoted to him; and I assure you, his sudden departure, and prolonged stay, have thrown a gloom over her which it requires all my little management to dispel.

"Do me the favour not to allude to this affair if you see him on his return, for he is so extremely shy upon some points, that he might be seriously annoyed with my having told you any thing about it. I am happy at the settlement of the arrangement, because I have always observed that an equal marriage makes the happiest *menage*—if a man, in

George's station, were to have married a person of inferior rank, however amiable and respectable, she never could have felt at her ease amongst his family and connexions; on the contrary, she must have experienced, daily and hourly, mortifications from her total want of place and station. Emma is a delightful creature, and I am quite sure would have the pleasure of seeing you here, and at all events in London, which I think you told me you proposed visiting next season.

"This is a charming place, and George is doing wonders with it;—a few thousand pounds scattered with taste makes such alterations, not only in the decorative parts of a house like this, but in its essential comforts,—I really think when I get home to Dale Cottage, which I now much fear I shall not do till next summer, I shall feel as one always does returning to a small house from a large one, "cribbed, cabined, and confined;" however, there are certain *agremens* in your village which certainly compensate for any minor inconveniences, and amongst them, assure yourself, my dear Miss Lovell, your society is to me the principal one.

"Let me beg you to remember me to dear Mr Lovell, and beg him not to exert himself too much in the discharge of his duty as executor, but to take care of himself, not only for your sake and his own, but for the sake of the numberless people who look up to him and exist upon his bounty.—Adieu, my dear Miss Lovell, and believe me, always most sincerely yours,

"FRANCES SHERINGHAM."

"P. S.—Write to me whenever you have a leisure hour, and tell me what you are doing."

This was an agreeable epistle—it saved a world of trouble, although it gave a world of pain. Emma read—re-read it—not exactly all of it—but those particular passages which authoritatively and unequivocally announced the marriage of Lord Weybridge with Lady Katharine Hargrave. It seemed to Emma that she had dreamed a horrible dream, or rather that she had suddenly awoke from a happy dream to a horrible reality—could it be—was it possible that George should have so entirely forgotten his own voluntary pledge—have belied the earnest feeling of his heart, and one which he had flown, as it were, to express, the moment that his change of station had left him at liberty to act as he pleased?

Emma knew the character of her right honourable correspondent, and she saw through the filmy web of compliment and civility which she had wove to catch her; she could

believed the whole of the contents of the letter to—Lord Weybridge was at hand to confute it, if untrue—besides, Lady Frances would not venture to use the names of persons in connexion with that of her daughter, unless the thing was irrevocably fixed and settled.

Yet—George had made an effort to resume the subject the day before—she herself had checked it—and could not pursue a course of such useless duplicity, trifle with her feelings, and wantonly excite hopes of happiness, merely to disappoint them?—no—that she could not believe—then how was it—or what was she to do, upon his return to the Rectory?—If she spoke of Lady Frances's letter, he would naturally inquire what were its contents; and if he did, she must, of course, confess their nature, which Lady Frances had expressly begged her not to do.

In the difficulty of the case, she came to a resolution, to consult her father, to whom she imparted it, at first seriously objected—however, upon a further discussion of the subject, he acceded to her proposition, and if he were not altogether ignorant of her feelings towards Lord Weybridge, she permitted him to understand so much of the point and object of Lady Frances's letter, that he held out but a very short opposition against the request she made, and at length agreed, convinced by her manner and observations upon its merits, that it was the wisest, the kindest, and the most delicate step she could take.

CHAPTER XII.

“ ——— Till this cruel moment
I never knew how tenderly I loved thee;
But on this everlasting separation,
Methinks my soul has left me, and my time
Of dissolution points me to the grave.”

LEE.

WHEN the travellers reached Binford—George having procured MacGopus to follow his directions in the conduct of the affair with Emma,—they found Lovell as they had left him—but his daughter was gone. She had winged her flight to her suffering friend at Mopeham, and had so timed her departure as to pass Lord Weybridge on the road. The mortification of George, when he heard this intelligence, is inconceivable; for it left him exactly where he was when he first arrived at the Rectory, and placed him in

the situation from which, of all others, MacGopus was most anxious to extricate him: but his mortification was very speedily converted into another feeling, when Lovell put into his lordship's hands a packet from his daughter, telling him, that although he did not profess to be fully acquainted with its contents, it would be worse than affectation not to admit that he could comprehend the general purport of her letter. That he placed such implicit reliance on the conduct and discipline of his daughter's mind, that he did not hesitate to state his entire concurrence in all she had said; but he must beg as a favour of his lordship that the subject of her letter might not be referred to, so long as he remained at Binford; that afterwards, when the letter was burnt, and its cause forgotten, they might live upon the same terms of friendship as then existed between them, and that the subject never should be mooted again.

George was a good deal staggered at this appeal, and at the presentation of Emma's epistle; it was evident—how, he did not exactly at the moment understand—that she had anticipated him in breaking off the connexion, and that he was placed in the position of a professing suitor, unable to fulfil the promises which he was making—in short, it was so overpowering an incident to him, that it was with difficulty he could restrain his inclination to break the seal, and ascertain the contents, until he reached Dale Cottage, where, esconced in his dressing-room, he burst open the envelope, to read as follows:—

“ Binford, Thursday.

“ It may, perhaps, seem strange that I should take such a step as to address a letter to you upon a subject, too, of a most delicate nature, and upon which I believe we have never exchanged a syllable; but I have no hesitation in doing what I think and believe to be a duty to you, and to myself.—Upon your generous feelings and kind consideration I must rely for an excuse for thus committing myself.

“ Fanny—my kind, and now unhappy friend—lost no time in delivering the message to me with which you entrusted her, and I shall neither degrade myself nor affront you by denying that I received that communication with the liveliest sentiments of gratification and pleasure. I see neither impropriety nor indelicacy in confessing—under my present circumstances—that esteem and regard for you which I have never attempted to disguise, and which might, perhaps, had events turned out differently, have given place to sentiments and feelings which I should have been proud and happy to have cherished and acknowledged.

So much for what is past—I feel I have nothing to re-

reproach myself with—I have no intention of reproaching you. That you were misled with regard to the conduct of poor Fanny, I know, and having taken that impression of her innocent and almost compulsory flight from her home and her husband, I was naturally involved in her fault and her disgrace. This I completely understand; yet when I found you again here, undeceived by the dreadful confessions of the wretched man who yet lies unburied, I did hope that I should be cleared in your eyes of any misconduct, and flattered myself that I might, after your return from Fanny's, have hoped for a realization of those visions which you yourself taught me to contemplate, and have endeavoured to make the happiness of one for whom my regard will for ever remain unaltered. You yourself spoke on the subject to me—you endeavoured to induce a conversation, which I checked, for reasons which I can and will yet give you—and you left me, evidently discontented with my disinclination to listen to a renewal of topics which I had strong reasons for believing were most objectionable to part of your family.

“It was not because I esteemed you less—it was not because my heart had changed its feeling, nor that my regards were elsewhere directed, that I hesitated to listen to your protestations; it was because I was sure, from what I had heard, that any connexion between us would be a cause of contention and difference between you and your mother. God forbid that I should ever become the cause of such a dissension! It was clear to me that I never could be received into your family upon an equality of terms, and I could not endure to be admitted into it on sufferance, and considered a blemish upon your ancient and honourable bearings. I then resolved to stifle every selfish feeling, and leave you free as air, to select from a more suitable sphere one who might do you honour and credit, and who might be taken to your mother's bosom as a daughter-in-law, without one qualifying doubt or one harassing regret. That sacrifice, George, I had determined to make, and that was the cause of my hindering you from touching upon a theme as near my heart as it ever could have been near yours. It was not alone, that I was too proud to endure the humiliation, but I was too much devoted to you, to permit you to suffer from my want of importance.

“This I had done—and I could have met you on your return from Fanny's, and have told you my decision. I could have parted from you like a sister, and have loved you all my life as a brother. But there are sufferings which even stouter hearts than mine cannot endure. I enclose your mother's letter, which I received yesterday. It may seem that I violate a confidence in making a communication to

you, which she desired me not to make, but judging of the sincerity of that request by all the other parts of her letter I do not think it of sufficient importance to outweigh what I feel to be a duty to myself, before I take the deciding step of my life—that of imploring you never to attempt to see me again—never to write to me—never, if possible, to think of me.

“Is it possible, that when accidentally returning to my father’s house, the opportunity was afforded you of speaking to me alone, you, parted as you were but a few hours from her who is destined to possess your heart and share your honours—could have availed yourself of that opportunity to affront—insult—and wound me by a revival of the sentiments which you expressed some time ago through Fanny—what have I done to deserve such cruelty?”

“I tell you—because I have been taught to speak plainly and truly, and because truth is, in me, habit—that when I first became acquainted with you, I admired those qualities which you appeared to possess, and sympathized in those sentiments which you were in the habit of expressing; your mind, your manners, your accomplishments, all combined to increase the prepossession I felt, and I saw in you candour, and honour, and rectitude. Your conduct and conversation evidently inferred that the feeling I entertained was reciprocal, and I would have sacrificed every hope in the world, to have ensured your welfare and comfort; you suddenly became ennobled, did I seek you *then*? did I value your rank? did I gaze with delight on your coronet? No. The very first act of your life in your new station, was to seek me out—and in a manner to me the most flattering—why should I not say—the most delightful—you, for the first time, solemnly and seriously declared your affection, and vowed eternal constancy to me—why—why did you do this? Believe me, I do not reproach you for attending to the advice of Lady Frances, nor do I blame you for connecting yourself with the house of Hargrave—it is right, it is prudent, it is wise, it is dutiful to do so. But why break a heart, which you knew was your own, by singling out a being, who never would have aspired to think of you as a husband in your new position of life, merely to delude and then deride her. Oh! how—how can this be reconciled with your previous conduct? How, when we met after that—how—only three days since—could you again allude to the declaration you had made, while your beautiful bride was waiting your return from the house of mourning, to be led to the altar.

“It is now all over—I can and I will bear it—the consolations of religion will support me in my trial, but I must not see you again—I have taught myself to look up to you as a

rior being. Let me think of you—when I do—as you
 e—but let me hear nothing from you—I will sit calmly
 patiently, and watch your bright career through life,
 pray for your happiness, but let me implore you, think
 more of *me*. I here release you from every promise—
 ry vow—every protestation—be free as air—and be happy
 nd oh! in that happiness, be just, and good, and true,
 so shall you prosper. I have said more—much more
 n I intended—more than I ought to have said. My father
 ows of my having written this letter—indeed he will give
 o you—with Fanny I may be of use—I may cheer and
 othe her—my aunt will go to Binford, to-morrow or the
 xt day, to stay with my dear father. Again I implore you
 t to write to me—not to mention my name to Lady Fran-
 s—never, never, to revive the recollection of me in your
 ind, but utterly to forget a being who seems to have been
 redlessly made the sport of fate and the object of vexatious
 resecution. Again I repeat, I forgive and release you, and
 st fervently and sincerely do I conclude my first and final
 ter to you, with the earnest prayer of my heart that God
 y bless you, and for ever.—

“EMMA.”

When George had read this letter and its enclosure, his
 slings were more bitterly excited against his mother than
 ever expected they could have been. The complaints of
 deluded girl were all so just, so fair, and yet so mildly,
 patiently expressed, and there was so much genuineness
 feeling and devotion of sentiment in all she said, that it
 s with difficulty he masked his feelings so as to hand it
 r to his friend.

“Well,” said MacGopus, when he had read it, “I told
 1 so—I said you would never marry that girl—now what
 ave said is come to pass, and no thanks to you—she wont
 re you.”

“She will have me,” said Lord Weybridge, “and she
 all.”

“She never will,” said the Doctor; “I know something
 human nature, and something of womanly pride and
 gnity—so long as your mother lives and flourishes, so
 ag will she remain Miss, whatever her name is ——”

“I will write to her this moment.”

“She will return your letter unopened.”

“I will follow her the instant the funeral is over.”

“She will not admit you.”

“I’ll write to Mrs Harbottle.”

“Who will merely repeat, in the young lady’s name, what
 ie herself has personally said.”

"I will, at all events, deny the fact of my engagement to Lady Katharine."

"You cannot deny it."

"Then by Heaven I'll never fulfil it."

"You must."

"Am I to be forced—pressed into the service?"

"You could not argue against the system if you were—but you volunteered."

"The fault is all yours."

"Ah, that's right, say it was *me*."

"So it was—the irritation—the ridicule—the calumny raised against Emma, and the effects of that infernal four square inches of mahogany looking brandy and water."

"You made it yourself."

"So I should have prepared poison at that moment, with equal readiness."

"Not you."

"How such an infernal mixture should have been seen in decent society, I cannot make out; nobody on earth but yourself would have thought of asking for such a thing."

"I don't know what people on earth may do, but I remember on the water you used to ask for it, and have it too as often as your neighbours. Don't reproach me with your own rashness—don't attribute to your condescension, in permitting me the privilege of doing what I like in your house, and what you like to do yourself every where else, the overthrow of your hopes and wishes—put it rather to the score of your own jealousy and credulity, and the active perseverance of your proud parent."

"Aye, aye, that's right," said Lord Weybridge, whose anger and mortification had nearly blinded him to the truth, "endeavour to make a breach between me and my mother, after having seconded all her propositions and supported all her arguments."

"I suppose you want me to leave you?" said MacGopus. "Another such imputation upon me, and we part for ever. No, sir, I have no wish to show differences between you and Lady Frances but I tell you the truth, and I tell it you fearlessly, because I am sure you ought to be convinced of it, and regulate your conduct accordingly; neither did I carelessly nor wantonly take part with her ladyship upon the subject of Miss Lovell. I told you from the outset that you would not be permitted to marry her. I knew the abandonment of that match was the *sine qua non* of your domestic tranquillity, and having established that fact in my mind, did not hesitate, when I heard your mother express an opinion of her conduct, founded upon facts which induced even you to abandon her, to concur in an opinion, which I should

am now as ready to retract as you are to revoke your pledge to Lady Katharine, if by so doing I could dissolve the bonds that are forged for you, or place Miss Lovell in your mother's estimation exactly where I think she ought to stand. But I repeat it, it is now all too late, and honour, and delicacy, both as respects Lady Katharine and regards Miss Lovell, demand that you should obey the injunctions contained in this letter, and as she releases you from all your engagements, you should release her from any further persecution."

"Forgive me, my dear fellow," said Lord Weybridge; "I speak hastily—I see things inaccurately—I cannot argue—I feel bitterly—you are right—quite right—and I am wrong—wrong in every thing I have done. How could I have been persuaded to imagine the possibility that a venerable excellent Pastor of our church should have sent his child as companion to a runaway wife, if he had not been assured of the reason and propriety of her abdication."

"Or how," continued the Doctor, "could you be cheated into the conviction that your place in your beloved Emma's heart was usurped by a nice little boy of eight years and a half old? Psha! and then you blame *me*."

"Of one thing, I think," said Lord Weybridge, "you will not deny the possibility, if not the propriety, of my doing. There can be no objection, surely, to my stating exactly the circumstances in which I am placed to her father. There can be no indelicacy in that course; it will satisfy *me* without agitating or annoying her: and at all events I shall stand better with that good man than I do at present."

"I would not do any thing of the sort. You have got yourself into a scrape—this generous young lady has extricated you. You are free. What good can explanations do? She is much too clever and clear sighted not to perceive the trick. She has seen it—she has acted upon the conviction—and why any more? If you tell him why you suspected her, he will naturally conclude that you must have had a very mean opinion of his principles and propriety; and if you impart to him the least cause of your jealousy, he will think you a most particularly silly and easily deceived person, and refer you to your little rival with the top and hoop, as the most suitable companion for your conversation."

"I am not so sure of that," said Lord Weybridge, "and I shall consider that part of the question coolly and dispassionately. As to Emma herself, I believe, painful as is the conviction, that you are correct in your views, and that I ought to pursue her no farther; but I can adopt another course of conduct in another quarter, and at least fulfil my determination of not marrying any other woman."

"I tell you, you must."

VOL. II.—K

"But at no stated period, at no given time. I may delay — procrastinate —"

"—And so try your best at breaking another heart. No—your course is not merely negative: it is positive. It is as much your duty to marry Lady Katharine, as it is to give up the Parson's daughter. To fulfil that duty honourably and conscientiously, you ought to time your marriage so, that it shall take place at the same period as you would, by circumstances have been enabled to unite yourself to your former love."

"This is a bitter draught to swallow," said George.

"It is my duty to prescribe it for you," replied MacGopus. "And if you think it worth your while to profit by my advice in future, I tell you distinctly, you must be content to gulp it."

"This is sharp practice," said Lord Weybridge.

"It is the straight path of honour—you must take it."

"Well, give me time to think of it."

"You have other things to think of," said MacGopus; "other duties to perform—solemn and serious ones too:—that, perhaps, is so much the better."

"Aye—it might be so;—but," said George, "recollect the scenes in which those duties are to be fulfilled—that business to be transacted—under the roof of *her* father—in rooms once blest with her presence, and adorned by her society. Can I—can I abstract my thoughts—conquer my feelings, or subdue my recollections, while there, and devote myself to the dry matters of fact, which must come under my consideration?"

"Can you?—yes," said MacGopus, "you can, and must—because you ought. Duty demands that of you, as strongly as honour requires you to take the course I have pointed out, in the other affair."

The time was not far distant when the trial was to be made. The arrival of the solicitor of the late Mr Harbottle was shortly afterwards announced to Lord Weybridge, and his presence requested at the Hall, whither Mr Lovell had, it appeared, preceded him. There was much to be done indeed: and, upon an examination into the state of his affairs, it appeared that the Squire's property, derivable from various sources, by far exceeded the amount at which it had been generally calculated.

Relations he had none living—incumbrances few—debts trifling. In short, by a rough calculation, it seemed probable that his widow, after the final arrangement of every thing, and the payment of the few small legacies mentioned in his will, would be in possession of funded property and freehold estates, to the amount of two-and-twenty thousand

pounds per annum, exclusive of Binford Hall, which, with the land surrounding it, might be fairly calculated at ninety thousand pounds more; the whole of which was left entirely at her own disposal, without control or limitation.

The disposition of this wealth by Harbottle, at his decease, exhibited a very striking instance of retributive justice, and the ruling quality—passion it cannot be called—strong in death. He had committed an act of atrocity, almost unparalleled in the annals of crime—the effect of sanguinary and diabolical revenge and misplaced jealousy. He had destroyed the man whom he imagined had injured him. He had, by so doing, securely gratified his malice, and triumphed, as he believed, over his guilty wife, by depriving her forever of the chance of again enjoying the society of his supposed rival in her affections. So far the fiend-like quality predominated.

Fanny left him. His first impulse was dread of the consequences of her revenge. After his interview with Lovell, that apprehension ceased, and he resolved to show the world how careless he was of her presence, by letting them see how lightly he felt her absence. During this career of dissipation and hypocrisy, a circumstance occurred which led to the conviction of his prime minister, Hollis, of some act of fraud in the management of his household finances; for Hollis, relieved of the check which a mistress and her house-keeper maintained over the expenses, procured the dismissal of that once favoured domestic, and having secured her removal, began a course of cheating, which was eventually stopped by the barefaced impudence of its contriver.

Then came into Harbottle's mind the suspicion, that Hollis, proved guilty in one case, might have been equally false and base in others. By dint of violence he extracted part of his criminality from the trembling wretch; and the other part was confessed by the culprit, not in the hope of forgiveness—for he saw it was far past that—but in a triumphant burst of gratified revenge against his credulous master, whom he instantly quitted, leaving him in a state of anguish and horror not to be described.

Now came that sudden revulsion to which, upon all occasions, the Squire was liable. The more he dwelt upon the rofligacy of the knave, the more brightly and purely shone the suffering excellence of his ill-treated wife. No reparation could ever be sufficient to atone for the barbarity of his conduct—no submission compensate for the cruelty which he had exercised towards her:—and all his hopes in this world were centred in the one great anxiety to obtain her forgiveness before he died. In this, as we know, he failed: but still, as in life he had considered money to be every thing, so in death he exhibited the same affection for

it; and satisfied himself, that all he could do to insure forgiveness here and hereafter, he had consummated, when he bequeathed every thing he possessed in the world to his unhappy Fanny.

On the day of the funeral, the shops of the principal tradesmen of the place were closed; and in the park near the house, and along the road by which the procession was to move, considerable numbers of persons were assembled—some few out of respect, but by far the greater part from curiosity. There was wanting in all the indications of feeling—that appearance of interest, which attaches to the closing scene of the life of a landlord and master, who has been esteemed and beloved. The tradesmen lamented, as they did on the day of his death, because they had lost a good customer; and the bettermost classes regretted the break-up of a “free and easy” establishment, where they had been hospitably received and liberally regaled. But there was no absorbing sorrow—no silent grief, no mute watchfulness for the approach of the hearse. The boys in the throng played, jumped, and frisked about as usual; and the itinerant venders of spruce-beer and ginger-bread, availed themselves of the somewhat unusual “gathering,” to proclaim most audibly the merits of their respective commodities. One pea-and-thimble man, from a neighbouring fair, made his appearance; but his little apparatus soon fell a victim to the just indignation of the parish beadle, who, at one smash, entirely destroyed it with the crape-covered knob of his long staff of office.

There was one heart deeply and bitterly affected—that of Lord Weybridge. His mind was attuned to sorrow. The recollection of his own position predisposed him for the reception of melancholy impressions: and there was, in the scene before him, a combination of qualities well calculated to excite a powerful feeling in his breast.

Here, in the darkened dining-room, where so often he had seen the hospitable, and then blameless Squire, presiding at his festive board, making the walls echo to his boisterous mirth, stood the black coffin which contained his mortal remains. On the very spot where one of the tressels rested, which supported the corpse, he had first known Harvey—since snatched from the world. How?—There, too, had he seen the lovely, lively Fanny, dispensing smiles and kindness—now herself stretched on a bed of sickness, and most probably hastening to follow her ill-starred husband. And beyond all, had he there first seen his Emma—now separated from him for ever. Never had there been a wreck of happiness, and hope, and joy, so sudden or so sweeping.

The mourners had now all arrived, and the hearse was

drawn up to the door. The people stood around and watched, as the body was placed in the funeral carriage. The heavy tolling of the church bell announced that the *cortège* had moved, and the train of followers increasing as it proceeded, a large concourse of spectators surrounded it when it reached the church.

Lovell read the beautiful service for the burial of the dead, with a solemnity that awed and moved his hearers. The coffin was lowered into the vault—the earth rattled on its lid—the ceremony ended—the people dispersed, and returned to their usual occupation or amusements; and in an hour after the gorgeous display of funeral pomp, Binford resumed its usual appearance,—dinners were given in the noon, scandal was talked in the evening, ladies sang, and gentlemen laughed, and the day concluded exactly as it would have closed had Harbottle been alive, or had never lived.

Lord Weybridge took leave of Lovell at the church door, and proceeded to Dale Cottage, whence in a short time he started, accompanied by his friend the Doctor, in his travelling carriage, on their return to Severnstoke.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Say, what strange motive, Goddess ! could compel
A well-bred Lord t’assault a gentle belle ;
O ! say, what stranger course yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a Lord.”

POPE.

THE reader must not suppose, because he is yet uninformed upon the subject, that Lord Weybridge really quitted Binford, without having had his intended conversation with the Rector, on the topic which, after all, was nearest his heart. He had on the contrary availed himself of the first favourable opportunity which their association on matters of business afforded, to open the matter to him, by deploring deeply the tone and character of his daughter's letter, which he felt it no breach of confidence to mention to her father, under the circumstances, and which he seriously apprehended had been intended, as it was calculated to put a final termination to all his hopes regarding her.

He found, as indeed he had anticipated, that Mr Lovell was intimately acquainted with all Emma's proceedings, and his infinite dissatisfaction, also discovered that the old

gentleman perfectly entered into all his daughter's feelings, and participated most unequivocally in the view which she had taken of the affair.

"My child," said the exemplary pastor, "however small her pretensions, and however humble her station, possesses an inherent pride not incompatible, I trust, with the exercise of every moral and religious duty. It is, as I need scarcely tell your lordship, neither the pride of wealth, nor the pride of birth, nor is it the still vainer pride of beauty or accomplishments, by which her actions are prompted, and her conduct is regulated. It is the pride of integrity, of honour, and of truth. The sacrifices she is capable of making to filial duty and friendship, you have yourself seen. Her firmness of resolution, when her determination is founded upon principle, I cannot, for a moment, doubt. Her delicacy has been wounded—her feelings have been trifled with, and the dignity which she feels it due to her sex and character to maintain, has been offended—she has taken her line, because she thinks it the right and just course to pursue, and I am assured, that neither your lordship's solicitations nor mine would induce her to waver in the conclusion at which she has arrived."

"But," said Lord Weybridge, "you possess a paramount power—you can command obedience."

"That power, my lord," said Lovell, "I must be pardoned for declining to use upon this occasion—in what I am saying, I speak only as a friend to both of you—I am, as you already know, informed of every thing that has passed between your lordship and my daughter—I feel honoured as she felt gratified by the unequivocal expression of your regard and esteem for my child, and the communication which she received from you, through her friend, Mrs Harbottle, spoke in glowing language to our ears, the noble generosity of your character, and the unqualified sincerity of your heart. But she paused before she gave herself permission to believe in the realization of the bright prospects your offer opened to her sight—there *then* existed a determination on her part to decline, what I believe would have constituted and secured her happiness, unless the result could have been met with the most unequivocal approbation from Lady Frances —"

"But, my dear sir," interrupted Lord Weybridge, "my mother —"

"Hear me out, my lord," said Lovell; "without this entire concurrence, Emma never would have consented to the marriage—I speak all this plainly and candidly, and I speak her words—that concurrence I believe never could have been obtained, and —"

"Yes—but —"

"One moment," said Lovell, — "that question is now at rest—the justice of my daughter's apprehensions upon that subject is proved, for the fact is now notorious, that your lordship is actually under an engagement to another lady."

"It is not so, indeed it is not," said George; "I certainly permitted my mother to open a negotiation on the subject of marriage with Lady Katharine Hargrave, but it has gone no length—it has —"

"Stay, my lord," said Lovell, somewhat indignantly, "I must not hear this language. My child may be unprotected in the fashionable acceptance of the word—but I cannot permit her to be so outraged as to be told that any man, whatever be his rank, has permitted a negotiation of marriage to be entered into with one lady, at a moment when he is soliciting the hand of another."

"I am not surprised at your anger," said George; "you are not aware of the circumstances. I had heard rumours of the most extraordinary nature, connected with Mrs Harbottle's flight—of Emma's participation in that flight —"

"And you had not sufficient reliance in her or me, to suspect their truth?"

"Other circumstances were put in array before me—my jealousy was excited—I admit it—I felt I had been neglected, betrayed, abandoned —"

"—In favour, perhaps, of Count Alexis Montenay?" said Lovell, smiling.

"No matter," said Lord Weybridge, "I was worked upon—my feelings were soured—falsehood and perversion were brought to bear upon my constancy and resolution—and I admit that I permitted, as I have already said, the subject of marriage to be mentioned to the Duchess of Malvern, but it was in a fit of madness."

"May I ask," said Lovell, "who the person is, by whom all this excitement has been produced—from whom all this intelligence was derived?"

"My mother told me —"

"Enough, enough, my dear Lord Weybridge," said the Rector, "could you, if you spoke for hours, exhibit a stronger reason for Emma's determination not to enter your family under existing circumstances, or produce a more powerful justification of the course she has resolved to pursue, than the plain simple fact that the disinclination of Lady Frances from the connexion is sufficiently inveterate, to induce her to exaggerate and misrepresent circumstances and occurrences of which, in fact, she knew nothing, and subsequently

go the length of making a confidential communication to a girl with whom she never had before corresponded, announcing the death-blow to what her ladyship imagined her hopes and expectations, by proclaiming to her, your approaching nuptials with Lady Katharine Hargrave?"

"But my dear friend," said Lord Weybridge, "I am my own master—free and uncontrolled—I have admitted that doubts and fears, and even jealousies were created in my mind. But truth, like the sun dispelling clouds, has cleared away every apprehension I entertained, and I am ready at this moment to overcome all obstacles, and surmount all difficulties which may appear to present themselves, and throw myself at Emma's feet, as ardent, as sincere, and as devoted a lover as ever existed."

"I tell you plainly, Lord Weybridge," said Mr Lovell, "your attempts to shake the resolution of my daughter will be fruitless—I will add—and here let me beg that the conversation may terminate, and that the subject may never be recurred to, in any future communication which, I hope, may exist between us—that if I could believe, which I do not, that Emma's determination could be subdued, and that she were to yield to a tenderer feeling all that is dear to herself and her character, I myself should interpose my parental authority to save her from such a degradation, and if she persisted, consider her for ever lost to me—but I have that confidence in her, which makes me careless of results—I know her, and I know that the strongest proof you can give of that friendship which we both of us shall continue to feel for you, will be exhibited in abstaining from any further solicitation on a subject which is henceforth eternally interdicted."

Here Lovell, much to the surprise of Lord Weybridge, who was not prepared for so decided a movement on the part of the old gentleman, rose, with an evident determination to conclude the conversation.

It was clear to George, as it must be to the reader, that both Lovell and his daughter exonerated him from blame in the affair—that they both felt conscious of the extraordinary influence Lady Frances possessed over her son, and while they could not but despise the meanness of which she had been guilty during the progress of her manœuvres, they saw, in her resolution to thwart the union of the lovers, the seeds of future misery to both of them, if they should either out-general her ladyship in strategy, or declare open hostility and marry in spite of her.

This dialogue Lord Weybridge related, as nearly as he could remember it, to MacGopus, on the road homewards.

"You had better have let it alone," said MacGopus;

Her mother's letter to the girl shows what she thinks of the other affair—take my advice, marry the Duchess's daughter and have done with it."

"Not I."

"You must."

"Who is to force me?"

"The prejudices and customs of society," said the Doctor, "if those don't answer—there's her brother the young Duke—if that does not drive you into it, there's an action at law."

"Absurd," said George, "as if a daughter of the Duchess Talvern would hunt a husband through Westminster Hall."

"A duchess may do worse than *that*," said MacGopus, "you are pledged, so there's an end—besides your quiet beauty won't have you—you are rejected—discarded—I know my Lady Frances would go crazy if she knew of that." "I am crazy myself," said Lord Weybridge, "and was a crazy still when I permitted her to negotiate."

"Crazy?—hazy you mean," said his comforter.

His sort of sneer brought on one of their ordinary quarrels, and the rest of their journey was made up of a sort of ill conversation, alternately storm and sunshine, till at length they found themselves deposited in safety at Severn-bridge.

In the mean time Emma had reached Mopeham, and was now in the society of her afflicted friend. But how differently circumstanced from what she had been when she was domesticated with her. Then she felt amidst her sorrow and sympathy an apprehension which she dared not resist, and a dread which she could not entirely overcome. Now, all the horrid mystery had been cleared up, and Fanny was exonerated from every imputation.

It mattered, however, little to the poor suffering object of Mr. Lovell's solicitude. The first dreadful incident, involving as it did, the death of one whom she truly esteemed, and the barbarity of another, whom it was her duty to love, had produced a violent shock upon her nerves, and, indeed, upon her constitution generally. The sudden change from a life of careless gaiety and constant pleasurable excitement, to a life of existence of dullness and quietude, unbroken and unvaried, added to the effect produced by the catastrophe which had driven her from her home, and those acted upon her by the unexpected demise of her husband, parted from him and anxious, yet unable, to see her once before his eyes were closed forever, had been too much for her; and when Miss Lovell reached her bed-side, she was barely conscious of his approach and presence; a restless languor had entirely

"Yes, but," said Emma, in reply to some observation at this point, "a man who loves a woman sufficiently to propose to make her his wife, should surely have sufficient confidence in her to believe her innocent until she is proved guilty. I certainly acquit George of the whole fault, because I know the powerful influence his mother has over him; and I know, as I have told you fifty times, how constantly and systematically she has exerted it on this particular subject."

"But, my dear Emma," said Mrs Harbottle, "Longbridge is surely capable of judging for himself."

"So you have said before," replied Miss Lovell; "a man has such reliance in another's judgment, and respect for the opinion of that other, what signifies or competence to judge for himself? However, his prayers are for his happiness. I am sure that his feelings towards me are not altered—he has suffered himself to be worked upon by misrepresentations, and assertions and calumnies."

"Of which, dear girl," said Fanny, "I have been the unhappy cause. Yes, Emma, it is too true—I feel I think of it by day and by night—but repentance and however natural, cannot alter the course of circumstances. I consider myself the destroyer of your happiness, the cause of all your misery—for this fault—not intimated either—I can never make you reparation."

"You must not talk thus," said Emma. "Believe me, truly, I am not unhappy. I live upon the hope and expectation of seeing those whom I love and esteem happy. I could have made them; and as to my conduct in respect to yourself, which appeared so equivocal, and that as my father tells me in his letter, George attributes the failure of his implicit confidence in me—although it is ostensible—the tangible point—upon which we are agreed—I solemnly declare to you, as my father knows, no power on earth would have induced me to make a mistake unless with the free, full, and entire consent of Lady Longbridge. Under any other circumstances, both our lives would have been lives of misery; and it was not less with a view to curing his happiness than preserving my own, that I took that resolution long before I quitted Binford with you."

"You are a kind considerate girl, Emma," said Mrs Harbottle; "but I never can believe that if he had been drawn into conduct which, in my view, nothing could justify, arising from that unlucky journey, you would have had cruelty enough to refuse him."

"It would have been just and right, and wise and proper," said Emma.

"Yes," said Fanny, "but I remember the time when wisdom and prudence were not considered the most striking characteristics of love."

"I will not argue with you upon this matter as one of feeling," said Emma; "I *have* decided, it is therefore now my duty to overcome the sentiment I once delighted to cherish, and thus being no longer in love, as you call it, I can, without any great inconsistency, be both prudent and sensible. All I entreat of you is not to agitate or worry yourself by any reflections on what has happened as far as I am personally concerned."

It was in vain for Emma to endeavour thus to soothe her mind. She was assured of Lord Weybridge's attachment—his devotion to her, and however powerful his mother's influence might be, she was convinced that if she herself were not unfortunately afforded her a ground to work upon, her dislike to the connexion would have been conceded to her son's representations, and that Miss Lovell would have become Lady Weybridge: a circumstance of the occurrence of which there did not now appear to be the shadow of a possibility.

As we have elsewhere to go in order to watch the proclings of the noble baron, at his place in Worcestershire, had better dispose of the Rectory party before we take our departure for Severnstoke. Mr Lovell, in about a week after the sale, arrived at Mopeham, and all the necessary arrangements having been made, it was settled that he and Emma should proceed to the place which Fanny had selected for her retreat, and having in some degree established themselves there, she was to follow.

His order of march appeared, both to Lovell and his daughter, strange, and neither of them could exactly understand what Fanny's intention could be in thus dividing their resources. But she remained positive upon the point, and of course there was no resisting her reason, at least that which she assigned, namely, that they would be enabled to judge of the accommodations which might be available, and that they could at once proceed to the house that might be taken, without the necessity of staying previously at an inn, or of lingering about after she had once reached her place of destination.

That she had another motive the reader will perhaps never after discover; be that as it may, their progress was delayed according to her directions, and the Rector and daughter, in one of the carriages, with two of Mrs Harbottle's servants, and Emma's maid, proceeded to the sequestered and romantic town of Minehead, Mrs Harbottle having been recommended to the air of that side of the

British channel, in preference to the milder and more relaxing climate of the western and southern coast of Devonshire, to which she at first purposed going.

The feeling which Mrs Harbottle appeared to entertain towards the Rector, was more closely allied to that which a daughter entertains towards a father, than any other. She felt how much she owed him, and reposed a confidence in him, which, strange as it may sound, she had never felt disposed to place in her husband. The gentle and refined manners of Lovell, subdued and tempered by age, and a knowledge of the world and its ways, soothed her sorrows, and gained her affection; and it is perhaps no discredit to her to say, considering how she had gained and how she lost her husband, that the peaceful quietude of her present life, passed in the society of such estimable companions, had a tranquillizing effect upon her mind, which that excellent man took advantage of, to lead her thoughts to worthier and more exalted subjects, than perhaps she had been sufficiently in the habit of considering, and profiting by the occasion, without either forcing her inclinations, or appearing to regulate her pursuits, prepared her, imperceptibly, for the awful change, which from the moment he first saw her at Mopeham, he was convinced she was at no great distance of time destined to undergo.

The accommodations at Minehead, romantic and beautiful as is the neighbourhood, were scarcely adequate to the demands of the visitors, and it was not until after two or three days' management, during which Lovell and his daughter were lodged at the Feather's Inn, that any arrangement, with a prospect of comfort, could be made. At length two houses were secured, which adjoining as they did, were capable of being united in one, and there with a fine view of the Bristol Channel and the opposite Welsh coast before their windows, the Rector and his child erected their standard, despatching one of Mrs Harbottle's servants to announce the result of their inquiries, and to pilot the main body of the establishment to their quiet retirement.

In three or four days Fanny arrived and joined them, but so much exhausted by the effect, that it was not without the greatest alarm and anxiety Lovell insisted upon calling in the Paracelsus of the place, in combination with the Galen of Dunster, who agreed—as doctors are not always said to do—upon the absolute necessity of the patient's being kept perfectly quiet, enjoying as much as possible the sea air, and divesting her mind of every thing like care or anxiety.

How easy it is for doctors to prescribe!

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Around
The boat, light skimming, stretch'd its oary wings ;
While deep the various voice of fervent toil
From bank to bank increas'd, whence ribbed with oak,
To bear the British thunder black and bold,
The roaring vessel rush'd into the main.”

THOMSON.

THE three weeks which had been occupied by the party in settling themselves at Minehead, had been passed at Severn-stoke in a very different manner. In the one place all that had been done had been regulated by an unqualified desire for peace and quietude ; at the other, truth to be told, bickerings, anger, and jealousies were in constant operation, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Lady Frances by dint of continued contrivance, managed to keep the Duchess and her daughter in ignorance of the rooted disinclination of George from the match—because she felt sure that their pride would instantly have fired at the notion of any thing like doubt or hesitation on the part of their noble host ; notwithstanding which, it may be as well to observe, that the determination of her Grace to make Katharine Lady Weybridge before she had done, was so marvellously strong as to close her eyes and ears against much, which, with the aid of a running commentary on the part of Doctor MacGopus, must otherwise have opened them to the real state of the case—but as the proverb says, “ none are so blind as those who wont see,” and to use a very homely expression with reference to so very fine a lady, her Grace during the last fortnight had pocketed several affronts, which in a less worthy cause, she neither could have been prevailed upon to overlook nor forgive.

George fought off his mother with great ingenuity, and argued upon the indelicacy of forcing on any thing like a marriage so shortly after the death of his relations.

“ My dear child,” said Lady Frances, “ this is all false delicacy, and a punctiliousness now exploded—if a death happens in a family, in these days nobody stays at home but the deceased. What were these people to *you*—by blood, relations I admit, but you had no ties to them of affection or friendship, you never associated with them, and they are gone.”

"True," said George, "they are gone—and so, we are here—but still it seems to me, as if 'the funeral baked meats would coldly furnish forth the marriage tables;' and I think a somewhat longer pause between the events might seem more decent to the world."

"To this," said Lady Frances, "I can have no objection, provided you so conclude the affair that it may be talked of—promised—expected; and that the pledge which, in your name, I have given to Katharine, may be redeemed."

"I gave no pledge," said George.

"Forgive me, George," said his mother, "I have your own friend for my witness—you commissioned me to make the offer—I lost no time in doing so, and had you not been called away by the death of that horrid man—(whose face I wish with all my heart I had never seen), that day would have concluded the preliminaries. As things unfortunately turned out, you have been removed from an association with a being who loves you, to the influence of a faction—a *clique* who wish to secure you for the mere sake of rank and connexion; and you return from their society labouring under the effect of misrepresentations which have been imposed upon you, by the artful pretender to a rank she would disgrace, and the anxious coveter of a fortune she would abuse."

"Mother," said Lord Weybridge; "praise Katharine as much as she deserves; she is fair, accomplished, amiable, and agreeable—of high blood and noble lineage—admitted; but do not, in endeavouring to exalt *her*, attempt to debase a being of whom you literally know nothing. Your only chance of obtaining my consent to make this very noble alliance, upon which you have fixed your heart, arises from the avowed resolution of this adventurer, this ravenous seeker of place and fortune, never to see me more."

"Ridiculous," said Lady Frances.

"Yourself shall see the proof," said George, "this plain and humble unsophisticated Parson's daughter, rejects me—spurns me—banishes me from her presence, forbids my pursuit of her—and your excellent and accomplished son the idol of your heart, and the much desired of Her Grace the Duchess of Malvern and her right honourable daughter, is cast off as unworthy the notice of this envious ambitious plebeian."

"You surprise me."

"I tell you truth," said George; "and her father seconds all her determinations upon the subject. She abandons me eternally, and he applauds the decision."

"The man is wiser than I took him for," said Lady Frances.

"And the girl ——?" said George.

"A greater fool than I imagined," replied her ladyship; however, I presume you are not of a temper to bear an insult like this. You have the spirit of a mouse, I conclude—or of a worm—you will not be trod upon by such people as these without turning."

"I will not wound your feelings, my dear mother," said Lord Weybridge, "by going into details upon the subject. I shall content myself by telling you that I never can sincerely love any woman as a wife ought to be loved, but Emma Lovell—how this wide difference has arisen between us, I leave to those who are adepts in making mischief, to determine—their plots have been successful; and she and I are separated for ever."

"Then," said Lady Frances, "your course is so much the easier—you will not consent to wear the willow for the Parson's daughter, or let the recollection of her inoffensive mediocrity weigh in the scale against the claims and qualities of Lady Katharine."

"Let me beg of you not to institute comparisons," said George, "they are always invidious, and must be unjust to one of the parties—I tell you I have not a word to say against Lady Katharine; and if, as I sincerely believe to be the case, Emma has finally discarded me—and if it is shown, that I must, unwillingly I confess, and most assuredly under the influence of false reports, marry another person, I have no greater objection to marrying Lady Katharine than any body else, but with feelings of such a nature I must have time to make up my mind to a step so decisive as that which you call upon me to take."

"And how am I to amuse her with hopes, or lull her into patience?" said her ladyship; "every day I expect the Duchess herself to speak to you on the subject."

"If she does, I shall tell her Grace the truth," said George.

"Then she will snatch up her daughter and fly."

"If I were quite sure of that," said George, "my veracity in the description of my sentiments would be most rigidly correct."

"You are incorrigible, George," said Lady Frances, "for now even upon your own showing I see no reason for your coldness and hesitation—admit that you did admire this Parson's daughter—you yourself allow that that affair is all over—I conclude you are not going to stoop to intreat and implore."

"Indeed I am not," said George, "because I know it would be all in vain; but this I know, that I am not able to command my feelings or dictate to my heart, as I may be

imagined to command my ship or order my crew. It requires time to obliterate, or rather sufficiently to weaken such an impression as Miss Lovell has made upon me, to endure such a proposition as that which you think proper to make. I honestly and fairly tell you, I never can love as I ought to love the woman I may be married to, Emma not being that person. Surely then it is only just and reasonable to let the poignant disappointment which oversets me at present wear off, in some degree, before I am called upon to fulfil an engagement into which I entered, if indeed I entered into it at all, in the full conviction that the being to whom I was entirely devoted, had forfeited all claim to my esteem and affection, and had not only imprudently committed herself in the flight of a runaway wife, but had subsequently entered into a new engagement with a Frenchman."

"Which Frenchman," said Lady Frances—

"Turns out, as I wrote you word, to be a child of nine years old, now gone to school for the first time in his short life."

"Well, then, George," said Lady Frances, "you shall neither be hurried nor worried—you must see how very much attached Katharine is to you—do be good-natured and lively—and kind—and speak to her and the Duchess—and do what she wishes about sitting for your picture—she paints admirably—and there are several of her likenesses excellent—sit to her as she begged you yesterday—it will make so good a plea for two or three hours' conversation—and she will delight in it so."

"I have no objection," said his lordship, "if I may have MacGopus in the room."

"My dear George, what on earth for?" said Lady Frances—"she is frightened to death at your doctor—whom she calls 'your pet'—and so am I—to tell you the truth I do not think he improves upon acquaintance."

"He comes out with some ugly truths now and then," said George, "but they cannot be disagreeable to such spotless angels as the Duchess and her daughter."

"Well, and then George, there is another point upon which I wish to speak," said Lady Frances.

"Proceed madam," said her son.

"I do think you ought to cultivate your neighbours more than you do," said Lady Frances; "you see every body has been here—I have driven half over the country to leave your tickets, but that is not enough—you have evaded several invitations on a plea of business and so on, but I think you ought to give one or two parties."

"I still plead the brevity of our mourning," said George.

"Indeed there is nothing in that," replied Lady Frances

"I was talking to the Duchess about it, and she quite agrees with me. It is right to form connexions and support interests—and both as a matter of private convenience and public advantage, we think that bringing your neighbours round you, will be of infinite service, morally and politically."

"For the moral part of the affair, I grant you," said George, "but for the political utility of it, the day is over—the course which public affairs are taking, will in three or four years from this time, neutralize all the power of the aristocracy, and all the distinctions which have hitherto existed between the peer and his dependants will be cancelled. I should be glad to stand well with my neighbours, and, therefore, if you have satisfied yourself that we have done all that decency requires in so long abstaining from gaiety or mirth, let us have some parties, let us bring the county together; only, if I could, I would rather consult my *homme d'affaires* here, in making out the lists of invitations, so as not to bring together clashing factions, or pit foe against foe at the dinner table."

"And let there be something like a ball in the evening," said Lady Frances, "nothing is so gratifying to foolish people as dancing—they are pleased with themselves, and pleased with their partners, and they are pleased with the animal exercise; and the small mental exertion required to jump and shuffle about a room, just suits the ordinary run of people, and we will give them plenty of supper and oceans of champagne, and make them as happy as the season requires."

"Agreed," said George; "it shall be done."

"And George, you *will* sit for your likeness to Katharine," said Lady Frances.

"Whatever you wish shall be executed, my dear mother," replied his lordship, who readily caught at any thing which he fancied likely to occupy his attention, and keep his thoughts from straying to his obdurate Emma.

The portrait-painting scheme her ladyship considered excellent; it would associate George and Katharine together morning after morning, and as for the skill of the amateur artist, she troubled her head little about that, so as she could complete the family picture which she herself had so anxiously designed.

Amongst the other changes which had taken place in her ladyship's feelings, she had conceived an inveterate hatred for MacGopus, upon whom she looked as the confidant of George in the Binford affair, and to whose counsel she attributed much of his lordship's too evident coldness and indifference towards Lady Katharine. She knew, however, she could not succeed in detaching her son from his ancient friend, and therefore she impressed upon his mind the propriety of assembling larger parties at Severnstoke, in order,

she hoped, to drive away the Doctor, who was continually expressing his love of snugness, and a select circle. This was one of her objects in suggesting an influx of company, and another hope which she had, in reserve, even if that scheme failed of success to its fullest extent, was, that the change of society, and the introduction of new visitors, might divert George from the contemplation of his unfortunate attachment, and rescue him from his protracted after dinner conversations with his influential adviser. Thus will be seen her ladyship's motives for changing her policy, and for advocating parties not resident in the house, so as not to interfere with the morning avocations of George and the bride elect, but so contrived as to enliven him in the evening, to raise his spirits, to amuse his mind, and to render the repose of the next morning's "sitting" a relief after the excitement of the preceding night.

Accordingly, the picture scheme was forwarded with laudable activity.—Canvass stretched, and colours ready, with palettes, palette-knives, bottles, bags, oil, and brushes, speedily arrived from London, to furnish the means for the morning avocations.—While, in order to give *eclat* to the parties, the family plate, new polished and burnished, was conveyed to Severnstoke in charge of a couple of *attachés* to Messrs Rundell and Bridge; the rooms, which had been newly furnished, were completed—the curtains were put up—the carpets laid down—furniture of the most elegant and novel description, selected under the classical eye of Lady Frances, crowded the suite of apartments, and the seat of the Sheringhams looked as it had never yet looked since it was built.

George, it must be admitted, took little if any pleasure in these magnificent proceedings; and it appeared to his anxious parent that, in proportion as the place became gayer and more splendid, he grew more melancholy and abstracted, a circumstance which did not escape the notice of the Duchess, and had excited the remarks of her daughter: but Lady Frances satisfactorily accounted for the depression of his spirits, by attributing it to the shock he had received by the sudden and terrible death of Harbottle, connected as it was with the destruction of his amiable friend Harvey. It was not in his nature to be unkind, and therefore his manner towards Lady Katharine was all gentleness and good nature.—The total absence of any thing like enthusiasm, his sullen silence upon the subject most natural to be spoken of under these circumstances, Lady Katharine attributed to the general want of sentiment now so observable in all such matters, and she saw, in his careful avoidance of what used to be called Love-making, nothing beyond a desire to steer clear of the charge of romanticism, which would infallibly

attach to any man who, in these enlightened days might be detected in the expression of a feeling which, in other times, it was the lover's glory to admit.

The age of sentiment is past—the world is much too wise to encourage any thing so childish; and the same enlightenment which is destined to level all distinctions, and throw down all barriers in the political world, has opened the eyes of hitherto deluded lovers to the folly of feeling, and the absurdity of tenderness.

Lady Katharine neither expected what she considered the mawkish, whining, schoolboy solicitude, nor the unvarying, shadow-like attendance upon her, such as ladies of other times required of their cavaliers. Like her mother, Lady Katharine admired Severnstoke and Grosvenor-square—had no objection to a baronial coronet, nor to an income of thirty or forty thousand pounds a year; with these she had no objection to take George Sheringham. It was not that she was mercenary, neither would she have linked herself to age or decrepitude for the sake of wealth or rank, nor would she have done a violence to her feelings by marrying in any way against her inclinations; but she liked Lord Weybridge, and had liked him before he was Lord Weybridge—that is to say—she liked his conversation—was pleased in his society—and perhaps liked it better, because at that period George, from not being considered an eligible *parti* for her, had been, as we already know, driven away from her, and she kept away from him. At present she felt, by the assurances of both mothers, that whatever appearances might be, she was the affianced wife of Lord Weybridge, and although her consent had never been formally asked by him, it had been, as she felt, tacitly given by herself, and so she went, satisfied how the affair must end, and that she should marry a very agreeable man, with a very pretty sounding title, and a very handsome property; and that all things suiting, they should make a very happy couple, and on the whole they should do extremely well.

“MacGopus,” said Lord Weybridge, “I have done something to-day that will make you stare.”

“Not it,” said the Doctor; “I am surprised at nothing, now-a-days.”

“I have written to London ——”

“For a license to be married.”

“No, upon a totally different subject. You will promise not to betray me to my mother?”

“Not I,” said MacGopus.

“You will think me mad, I dare say,” said George, “and I believe I am so; but I have done it—I have written to the Admiralty to be employed.”

"What!" exclaimed MacGopus, opening his eyes to their greatest width—

"I have," said Lord Weybridge. "A ship would relieve me from my difficulties—time would change all these things. I should like to get my post rank, and take three years' swing in a frigate."

"Mad, if ever any man was mad in this world," said the Doctor.

"I shall be driven mad if I stay here," said Lord Weybridge. "I have tried every effort to rally—I have endeavoured to act as my mother wishes, and as you have taught me to believe I ought to act; but the impression which has been made upon me is not to be effaced, and I can fight up against it no longer."

"What good will the ship do?" said the Doctor.

"Take me from all this entanglement, and leave me at liberty for the term of my command," said George.

"I should think," said MacGopus, "that instead of a commission for a frigate, the government will suggest a commission of lunacy. Give up all your comforts—your splendour—your ease—and what might be your happiness—for a ship!"

"D'ye think I shall get one?" said George, who was most anxious in his inquiry upon the subject.

"Leave the government your proxy, and see," said the Doctor.

"I have no politics; my mind is too much occupied by my own misfortunes to allow me leisure to think of any thing else."

"Exactly so," said the Doctor, "and that's the very reason why you should leave your proxy with the Minister. Delegate your power to *him*, and he will save you all the trouble of thinking."

"Well, now, MacGopus," said Lord Weybridge, "keep this measure of mine from my mother. If I obtain the ship, it will be a call to service. She knows me well enough to know that such a call no power would induce me to disregard. What I ask is, never undeceive her as to the manner it was obtained."

"I see no good in it," said the Doctor; "you must marry before you go—even supposing you do go."

"Most assuredly not," said George; "that would be an absurdity upon the face of it. Marry only to part—no—my pledge remains, if pledge it is; and when I return—if I return—and Lady Katharine has patience to wait that event—I shall be able to redeem it, at least more philosophically than I can do so now."

"All mad wild-goose nonsense," said MacGopus. "It is

to a question of her waiting or not ; you cannot get off the catch, and I repeat my opinion, that if even you get the slip, you must marry her before you go."

"Leave that to me," said Lord Weybridge. "I could conceal what I had done from you, although I resolved to do it without consulting you, that you might not be involved in any responsibility as to the consequences. All I ask is secrecy."

"I can hold my tongue," said MacGopus: "it would have been as well if everybody else had done the same. I presume—if I may be permitted through your interest to serve in a small craft—am I to go afloat with you?"

"Serve or not, you shall go," said George. "I shall be too happy to consider you my friend upon the cruise."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, "it may keep you out of scrapes and have me to vent your ill humours upon."

"I think the step I have taken a wise one."

"On the contrary, the height of folly ; but 'tis of no use talking—we have only to wait the answer. Come, my lord, this time you should go and sit for your picture," said the Doctor. "We'll talk of this another time—a ship!"

"Was there ever any thing so absurd?" said Lord Weybridge; "without a master at her elbow, Lady Katharine is as just as much notion of painting as I have. I don't like to object to the ceremony, but the thing is as much like me as Julius Cæsar."

"I think 'tis a remarkably good likeness," said the Doctor.

"Well, I hope she will please herself with the resemblance ; it may serve her to contemplate till my return."

"You'll never go," said the Doctor.

"We shall see ; I again enjoin you to secrecy as to my application—leave the rest to me."

"All I say is, marry her you must before you start ; it will be just as well to let the repugnance wear off after you are married, as to delay ; for you'll never be received again by that Miss —"

"Lovell."

"Never," said the Doctor ; "so between the two you are agreeably placed. Please your mother by marrying Lady Katharine first, and then please yourself by going to sea—you'll follow your own vagary—fulfil your engagements, get leave of absence, and give the young woman the chance of becoming a rich and handsome widow."

At this period of the conversation, a summons from Lady Katharine separated the disputants, and the Doctor proceeded to the library to read away the morning, while the noble lord resumed his seat in an armed chair, hoisted upon

a table, in a half darkened drawing-room, which had been expressly converted into a studio for the noble and accomplished amateur.

Lord Weybridge, however, was destined to suffer annoyances besides those which more particularly applied to himself. His peculiar connexion with Lovell in the Harbottle executorship, rendered a continual correspondence between them necessary, and every letter he received from the Rector—all on pure business—in which not one syllable respecting Emma was mentioned, renewed his griefs, refreshed his recollections, and completely overset him for a day or two; and scarcely had he recovered from the agitation and seriousness to which that one had subjected him, before another application from his colleague, again tore open the yet bleeding wounds which his preceding communication had inflicted.

During the week in which he had written to the first Lord of the Admiralty—at that period young in office—and naturally anxious to strengthen a very questionable ministry by all the support he could collect—he had received a most melancholy account from Minehead. Lovell represented the state of Mrs Harbottle's health to be, as the local physicians considered it, most precarious. They had, by desire of the medical men on the spot, sent to London for the first of the faculty, who had, at great inconvenience, visited her. His advice, and the opinion he privately expressed to Lovell, induced him to apprehend the very worst consequences.

"Poor soul," said Lovell, in his letter; "she has fallen into a state—not of unconsciousness or insensibility—but of languor, from which she endeavours to rouse herself, but in vain, and I fear that symptoms of consumption are showing themselves—the physicians have ordered our changing our position, and removing to the westernmost point of Devonshire. This is in direct opposition to the views and wishes which were expressed when we first took up our abode in this quiet and romantic corner, and she has evinced a strong aversion from moving at all—we must, I conclude, obey our orders, and use a gentle force to put them into execution.

"She begs me to remember her most kindly to your lordship, and bitterly regrets that circumstances prevent her having the pleasure of occasionally seeing you. She expresses a strong desire and even a resolution to write to you, upon some point which she admits to be deeply interesting to herself, but which she strenuously declines confiding to us. She is at present forbidden to write or read, and it is but for a short period of the day that she is sufficiently composed to allow herself to be read to.

Certainly if any thing were wanting to convince us poor mortals of the frailty and insignificance of worldly advances, the havoc which a few weeks have produced in her family, would afford a most striking and melancholy example. I declare to your lordship my conviction, that before six months have elapsed, she will have left us for ever, as far as this life is concerned.

"There is a point of great delicacy connected with her precarious situation, upon which it is impossible for me to touch, and yet it is one of so much importance, that it is almost criminal not to call her attention to it. I mean the disposition of her vast property—her nearest and only relation of whom I have ever heard her speak, is her aunt Jarman, at Mopeham, and it now appears that Mr Harbottle, myself, was a natural and only son, and that his mother has long since been dead. I have no reason whatever to believe that Mrs Harbottle has made any will, nor can I venture, in my present state of mind, to say a word upon the subject. Indeed, I doubt at this moment, whether she is even aware of the extent of her fortune—she evinces a total indifference towards every thing connected with such matters, and whatever is necessary to be done for carrying on the establishment, she has commissioned me to do, and has delegated to me the power of drawing upon a considerable sum which she has deposited in one of the Taunton banks.

"When that sum was paid into Kinglake's House I am not aware, for I have not been over to Taunton since my arrival here. I was surprised at the precaution, and activity of the measure; but I conclude the arrangement was made by her banker when she was at Mopeham. Thus, you see, I have become a sort of steward to the widow, and I feel myself bound to devote my care and attention to her who is, by her standing and rank in society, more isolated and alone in the world, than any human being I ever met with. I should be in better spirits if I could hope my stewardship might exist for a much longer period than I expect it will.

"I have sometimes fancied that the letter which she expresses a wish to write to you, might contain some information or wish upon this important subject, and if I can, with safety to her health, encourage her disposition to make such communication, I shall feel it my duty to do so. I have received very satisfactory accounts from the solicitors and the banking-house in London, as to the investment of the proceeds of the sale of the Binford property; but I feel some degree of nervousness at finding myself the sole manager of concerns not exactly adapted to my time of life, or in accordance with my professional avocations. However, to do my duty, must be our first effort, and since your lordship's

manifold engagements in the gay and busy world would be greatly interfered with by a closer attention to the minutiae of our trust, I am happy to devote as much of my time as I can spare from graver occupations, to the regulation of the ill-fated widow's affairs.

"I would venture, however, to suggest to your lordship, that in the next letter with which you honour me, you might enclose a short note to her—not of course pointedly alluding to matters of business, and least of all to the particular business which appears of the first importance, but calculated to excite her to a reply. It is clear to me that she has something on her mind which she desires to communicate to you specially—but as I have already said, I fear to argue the point, and should rejoice if she should voluntarily undertake to answer a letter from you, which, from the extremely high terms in which she always speaks of your lordship, I really think she would be very much pleased to receive."

Lord Weybridge read the letter from which these passages are extracted, with eager anxiety from the first to the last line, in the hope that Emma's name might once occur—but no, the usual silence was preserved, and although it appeared almost impossible, associated as she and Fanny were, to descant upon the sorrows and sickness of the one, without, in some degree, alluding to the sympathy and attentions of the other—so it was—the resolution never to hear from or be heard of by George, remained unbroken and unaltered, and the absence of the one magic word from the Rector's epistle, cast an unmitigated gloom over the whole of it.

It was evident to George that poor Fanny was dying—it was admitted by the Rector that she expressed the warmest regard for him—and the highest opinion of him—to whom did she express these feelings and sentiments?—the inference was conclusive—to Emma and her father—still then she was his friend, nor would she have indulged in such a strain, if she believed it unpleasant to her dear and faithful companion. The business in question, of the will, he did not see how he could interfere about, but upon other grounds he saw good reasons for complying with Lovell's wish that he should write to her, yes—he would write such a letter as she might show Emma—or perhaps Emma would be commissioned to read it to her—and yet what dare he say?—she had insisted upon his silence—he too was now doubly entangled—if he got his ship and saved himself, for the present, from marrying Lady Katharine, he would, by the same measure, be taken away from the possibility of any farther negotiation with the Lovells.

No man who has not been in a situation somewhat simi-

lar to that of our gallant hero, can picture to himself the state of his mind and feelings at this critical period—nor were his agitation and perturbation at all calmed by the announcement, from his lady mother, that sixteen friends had already accepted the dinner invitation, at Severnstoke, for the following Friday, and that one hundred and seventy-four cards were out for the evening of the same day.

As for her ladyship, she was now in her element—for Mrs Harbottle, she cared little for her illness or her sorrows—she was associated so entirely in her mind with the bane of her existence, the unoffending Emma, that even the afflictions of the one and the magnanimous conduct of the other failed to overcome the prejudice she had taken against the whole Binford *clique*; therefore did she delight when she found herself, for the first time in her life, able to direct fêtes and entertainments upon a great scale, and permit her taste and fancy to luxuriate in the decorations of a fine house upon the occasion of a reunion of all the grace, and wealth, and beauty of the surrounding country.

It was, moreover, edifying to observe how her ladyship, in all her orderings and countermandings, appeared to refer to Lady Katharine, always taking her ladyship as her companion and councillor in the different directions she was giving:—"don't you think, dear Katharine, that will look best?"—"How would you have it done, my love?" and half a thousand other expressions of similar import, all tending to impress upon the young lady's mind, that she, as mother of the noble lord, was only rehearsing for her daughter-in-law's instruction, that which she expected her to perform as his lordship's wife.

And to be candid, Lady Frances had a great deal of taste—she could not certainly claim the merit of first introducing live fish into a drawing-room, nor appropriate to herself the beautiful design of hiding lights in garlands of flowers, but she did her best to emulate those who struck out such novelties, and now that the means were afforded her, her genius shone forth.

The filial attention of George to his mother was exemplary—and as her influence over him was, in fact, unbounded, however free he fancied himself, so his gratitude for all her devotion to him in his early youth, manifested itself upon his accession to fortune. On her birth-day he presented her with a magnificent set of diamonds such as he had heard her admire in others. The family jewels were, with some very trifling exceptions, found at the bankers—those he touched not—the ornaments which he gave his mother were beautiful beyond even her hopes, and the Duchess and her daughter sounded the praises, not only of

his goodness of heart, but of the excellence of his taste, in strains which ought to have made him proudest of the proud, and vainest of the vain.

But no!—after the two hours' sitting, in which little enough was said as far as love went, and still less was done in the way of painting, he retired to his room to take counsel of MacGopus with respect to the letter which he had received from Lovell, and which, though it contained no actual reproach for neglect of activity, as executor to Harbottle, certainly had the effect of reminding him that he had been somewhat remiss with respect to the widow.

MacGopus, of course, negatived all his lordship's propositions, and contradicted all his assertions; but as something like a duty was to be done, he eventually came round to his friend's opinion, and accordingly, by that day's post, Lord Weybridge wrote to the Rector, and enclosed such a letter as he conceived most likely to elicit the communication which it was thought expedient he should have with Mrs Harbottle.

When he came to the conclusion of his epistle, he paused—hesitated—doubted—should he follow the example of Lovell?—should he utterly omit the name of Emma?—what should he do?—what ought he to do?—what will the reader think he did?—after some deliberation he folded the letter as it was—was going to seal it—had directed it—when opening it for one moment, he hastily added:—"pray remember me to Miss Lovell."

Well! there could be no great harm in *that*, after all.

CHAPTER XV.

———"Time on *Neptune's* wings
The welcome letter brings."

OLD SONG.

THE post of the succeeding day brought, amongst other letters, an answer from the first Lord of the Admiralty himself, marked "private," in answer to George's application for a ship. It was couched in the most civil terms, and stated that, without entering into motives which might induce Lord Weybridge to desire to be employed, the first lord had the greatest pleasure in acceding to his wishes, both as to rank and service, and that he would be posted forthwith to H. M. Frigate, *Destructive*, of forty-four guns, which they

were bringing forward at Portsmouth, and which would be ready for commissioning in about ten days or a fortnight. The first lord took the occasion of expressing himself, in the civillest manner, stating that the *Destructive* was destined for Channel service, and that no difficulty would be interposed to a sufficient leave of absence for his lordship in February in order to enable him to take his seat in the House of Lords, about the time of the opening of Parliament.

George, when he read this letter, and found his end achieved, felt exactly like a school-boy, with half a pound of gunpowder in his pocket, which he is afraid to confess that he has bought—he was quite sure that the announcement of the intelligence it contained would create a tremendous sensation in the family, and as he always did, when he was in doubt or difficulty, he summoned his friend Mac-Gopus into council.

The Doctor read the letter and threw it down with a sneer; for the Doctor, generally speaking, cared little for the Admiralty, which, in those days, had not much to say to his department of the service.

"Well," said his lordship, "what's the matter?—it is very civil and complimentary?"

"You've sold yourself to the devil," said the Doctor, "and he will have you one day or other."

"What d'ye mean?"

"Why that you are gagged—tongue-tied," replied Mac-Gopus.—"A compact is entered into between you and the first lord—he humours *you*—you must oblige *him*—I knew you'd get the ship—but I foresaw you would lose your independence."

"Independence!" said Lord Weybridge, "how do I compromise my independence.—I have no object to gain by truckling or creeping."

"Not now you haven't," said the Doctor, "because you have got the *Destructive*—but rely upon it, that's a bargain, and a blind bargain, and a bad bargain—and it won't save you from marrying Lady Katharine—I told you so before—I tell you so again, and I am more fully convinced than I have been yet."

"Why?"

"The Duke, her brother, is coming here," said Mac-Gopus.

"What the devil do I care for that,"—said his lordship, "you don't imagine that I am to be drilled into marrying?"

"I am firm to my text—marry her you must—your shilly-shally conduct for the last three weeks has put it out of your power to back out—if you had cut the knot the mo-

ment you came back from that place where we went to the funeral of the man who died, you might perhaps have done something."

"Why, what upon earth are you talking about," said George, "did not you yourself advise my not doing any thing?"

"Not I," said the doctor; "I told you that I thought you ought to marry the lady, and give up the Parson's daughter—and so I think still; but if you had not thought with me, then was your time to break off—now you cannot—and so I have told your mother."

"You have—and pray why?"

"Because I am sure it is right—why have you gone on sitting, and making that beautiful girl paint your picture, if you did not mean her to have the original? Why do you stand leaning over her chair when she is playing on the piano-forte? Why do you listen while she is singing?—Why do you go riding with her, and walking with her?"

"Are these crimes in society?" said George, "I am sure they are not. They may be, amongst the Hottentots in the Highlands, or in the coteries of the New Road; but what would you have a man do? turn bear or boar, and treat women who happen to be in his society as if they were unworthy of his notice and attention."

"Quere now,"—said MacGopus,— "what have the Hottentots to do with the Highlands?"

"Psha—imperturbable monster."

"Dunce!" said the the Doctor; "be a man, rouse yourself—see the position in which you stand—do what is right and honourable, and you will prosper—you would have been just as well without the ship, and a good deal better without the obligation—however, that's done—she's for Channel service, in peace time she'll serve as a yacht, and you can cruise about with your noble lady, and exhibit a splendid pair of aristocrats to the astonished multitude."

"You will drive me mad," said George; "however promise me one thing—let my mother decide upon the point without influencing her—let me discuss with her the question, whether I may not postpone my marriage till the expiration of my command—that is all I ask."

"I want to influence nobody," said MacGopus, "except yourself—I should like to see you act in a manner consistent with your character, and agreeably to the right feelings of your heart—you are now playing the fool—if it were any body else, I should think trying to play the knave—all this trick about the appointment is visible to the naked eye—it's unlike you."

"That step is irrevocable," said George; "I have

ked for employment and go I will—if it will not avoid
 union with a person I cannot love, it will at least rid me
 all the disagreeable consequences of it.”

“To Lady Frances, George was at length compelled to
 exceed—to her, by degrees, he opened his very extraordi-
 nary communication, shaping it, however, so as to appear
 as if he had been called upon for service. This her ladyship
 instantly discredited, and nothing would convince her of
 the reality of the appointment, but a perusal of the first
 lord's letter which completely disclosed the causes and rea-
 sons of his receiving it.

“I am thunder-struck,” said her ladyship, “any thing so
 near madness I never yet heard of—abandon your comforts
 the luxuries by which you are surrounded, hearts that love
 you, and lips that praise you, for a paltry command in peace-
 time—compromising too your parliamentary independence,
 a ministry just formed, and which either will not last six
 months, or if it do, will destroy every thing but itself—
 haven't you heard your uncle Frederick say that ‘whigs like
 us cut their own throats when they attempt to swim,’ and
 they fail in doing that, the chances are, that more throats
 in their own will be cut before they have done—Is it for
 us that you give up all your connexions—every tie to
 me, and the happiness of your domestic circle—and above
 all—Katharine?”

“There you have come to the very point,” said George.
 Do you consider that I give her up by accepting the
 ship?”

“Give up her society you must.”

“Aye, but—I mean, shall I, in your opinion, be forced to
 relinquish that *very desirable* match?”

“Assuredly not.”

“What must be my course?”

“Why if you have a spark of honour in your heart—if
 you possess any one attribute of your family—if you are
 what I have fondly hoped and prayed you might be—your
 marriage with Lady Katharine must precede your depar-
 ture.”

“So MacGopus says,” said George.

“And wisely and properly too,” replied Lady Frances;
 you have not only permitted me to negotiate the marriage,
 but you have, by your attentions and manner towards her,
 since that event, fully justified all I said. She is convinced
 that she is to be your wife—of course her delicacy never
 suffers her to make any allusion to the circumstance, and
 she waits, with patience, until you shall begin the subject.
 But it is understood, not only by herself and her mother, but
 by the whole of her family, and by her brother, who has

recognized that understanding as the cause for her protracted absence from Rochdale, and her long continued visit here."

"What am I to say—how am I to act?" said Lord Weybridge. "I admit the justice of many of your observations—I admit that in a moment of irritation I authorized you to say more than I should have even in a calmer moment have wished you to say; but when you recollect that, if I had not been suddenly called away the next morning, before I had an opportunity of explaining my meaning, I should have revoked that authority; and when you also recollect that the excitement under the influence of which I gave you the permission to speak to the Duchess was created by rumours and reports, all of which have since been proved to be groundless; and that whatever else of irritation I endured, was produced by the calm and placid interruption and contradiction of your present great friend and ally, the Doctor—I think you will make such allowances as might induce you to put an end to the affair altogether, without the slightest imputation upon either of our characters."

"With all these causes, my dear George," said her ladyship, "Lady Catharine has no concern; and I only ask you, besides the opinion which your most extraordinary conduct with regard to her would be calculated to excite, to consider what my position is. I stand before her family in the character either of an eager and unauthorized negociator for the hand of the young lady, or as having misrepresented altogether your views and sentiments. Ask yourself what will be thought of all this? If the young person who caught your fancy at Binford remained as ready to throw herself into your arms as she seemed to be at one time, you might have some reason for hesitating; but she has discarded—affronted you, and declared, with a pertness wholly unsuited to her place in society, that she will never enter a family with which she is not upon a perfect equality."

"I have no desire to go into any argument upon that subject," said George; "I had hoped, by the step I have taken about my employment on service, to postpone the conclusion of an affair in which my heart is not, nor ever will be concerned; but if it is put to me as a matter of duty, and a point of honour, I have only to repent the rashness which induced me to commit myself, and do that which is right."

"There spoke my own George," said Lady Frances, "you now see with your own eyes —"

"Not so," said George, "I see with the eyes of others; but I must give way, when, in addition to your view of the case, I refer myself to MacGopus, (whose principles of ho-

your are scrupulously rigid, and who, with all his perverseness of expression, never fails to judge correctly) and receive from him a similar decision against me. One favour I entreat—and upon the condition that it is granted, I will submit to any thing—let no notice be taken of what you know to be a change in my determination. I cannot make an alteration in my manner towards Katharine; let it be understood that every thing is in progress to the point which you all seem to think so desirable, and let matters go on as they are. Recollect the struggle I am to make—if unhappiness follows, be the fault where it ought—I must be the victim.”

“Well but now, dear George,” said Lady Frances, who having worked him into this lukewarm compliance with her wishes, “do write to this first lord, or whoever your correspondent is, and tell him that you don’t want the ship, that you —”

“No, not I,” said George; “no ship—no wife; if it were not that I had a handsome excuse to separate myself from the lady to whom I am in honour bound, I should not so readily acquiesce in the arrangement. I tell you that the impression made upon my heart by Miss Lovell—an impression strongly increased by the recent discovery of her entire innocence of every imputation against her—is such, that time alone can weaken it, or reconcile me to an existence shared with any other woman. I am ready to marry—to please others; but I am resolved to go to sea—to please myself. Lady Katharine is an Englishwoman, and will not, therefore, object to her husband’s resolution to obey the call of his country.”

“This,” said Lady Frances, “appears to be so near insanity, that, my dear George, I really —”

“Well, Madam,” said George, “I have said—you have the condition upon which I am ready to fulfil my engagements.”

“But do you think Katharine will subscribe to that condition?”

“That is not my affair,” said George; “I have applied for employment, because I thought it would relieve me from this tie; you tell me it will not—well and good; I have obtained the favour I asked, and I shall have the command of which through life I have been ambitious—I cannot relinquish it. Announce, therefore, to the Duchess that I have got such a command, and leave the rest to time. I have myself little doubt that the arrangement will be almost as agreeable to Lady Katharine as myself; and she, as mistress of Severnstoke, will have the advantage of your society, that of her

mother, and of as many of her friends and relations as she may consider agreeable."

"This is the most unaccountable—inconsistent scheme—leaving all your ——"

"Madam," said Lord Weybridge, "I make the greatest sacrifice I can make to justify your conduct. I give up eternally the hopes of happiness—I ask but one condition, and you hesitate. At the end of my three years' command my mind may be more reconciled to circumstances, and less under the influence of the fatal passion, which I cannot now pretend to conquer. I relinquish Emma,—I accept Katharine, and by the help of Providence, and from the effects of time, I trust I may return to my wife with an undivided affection, and that our future lives may prove as happy as I, at least, have any right to expect."

"A more extraordinary compact, perhaps, never was entered into," said Lady Frances; "however, I must not stand out upon terms. And pray how long do you expect it will be before this odious ship will be ready for sea?"

"Perhaps three weeks, a month, or five weeks," said George; "she will be ready for *me* in less than half that time."

"And how should the marriage take place, before that period?" said Lady Frances.

"I think it extremely absurd, and I have said so," said George, "but you find me in all things obedient to your will; therefore do you make your arrangements."

"But surely you will avow your intentions to Katharine?"

"I consider that done," said Lord Weybridge; "I have acted, they tell me, as if I acknowledged myself her affianced lover; and, therefore, all we have to discuss is the *happy day*."

"I can scarcely reconcile it to my conscience," said Lady Frances, "to permit you to marry this dear amiable girl under the influence of such feelings: and yet ——"

"Oh! I will be any thing you please," said George, "I will bring on the subject this very day—for as you say there is no time to be lost—and we shall be exceedingly joyous, and all will go well and gaily."

These words were uttered by Lord Weybridge in a tone of such cutting irony, with a look which so entirely belied the expressions he had uttered, that his mother began really to fear that the calamity which she thought had befallen him when he solicited for a ship, had come upon him more decidedly and more seriously.

"My dear child, do be rational."

"I am rational," said he, "and resolved; you prepare

the ladies for my departure on service, and leave the rest to me."

When he parted from his parent, the manner of Lord Weybridge was very unsatisfactory; there was a recklessness in his mode of conducting himself which terrified her; and she began to recollect that a third cousin, twice removed, of the first Lord Weybridge, had died mad, and thence, by a graceful slide down the family-tree, her ladyship traced out the consanguinity, and almost trembled at the probability of her dear George's being affected with the family failing.

The moment she had sufficiently recovered herself from the agitation which the interview had occasioned, she sought and found the Duchess and Lady Katharine—to them she explained the history of the ship, and the appointment, and the honourable feelings of George, who would let nothing like comfort, or ease, or independence, interfere with his duty.

"There is one great point gained by the event, I think," said her ladyship; "George, as I forewarned you, is so exceedingly shy and reserved, that he would have gone on 'loving,' as he says, with our dear Katharine, and never have taken courage to propose in form, or solicit her, as to any ulterior arrangements; now that the moment is arrived in which he is called upon to decide, he has gone to his room to write, to summon one of his solicitors hither to talk over business, and will, I know, Katharine, put some very sly yet serious questions to you this very evening."

"My dear Lady Frances," said the young lady, "you quite terrify me; besides, supposing he should be serious, what a strange appearance his running away so soon will have!"

"You have no idea of his sensitiveness about the service," said Lady Frances; "the effect will only be to mark his devotion to you, and his anxiety to secure your hand before his departure; besides which, as his frigate is destined, at least for the present, for Channel service, you will be able to enjoy his society by taking up your residence at the port at which he may be principally stationed."

"Poor dear Katharine," said the Duchess, "and she hates a ship so dreadfully!"

"Oh, mamma!" said Lady Katharine, "I am sure I never should hate any thing my husband liked."

"That, my love," said the Duchess, "is not quite so clear to me; but, however, duty is duty, and the only provoking part of the affair is, that he should have been selected just at the particular moment."

"Wholly unsolicited on his part," said Lady Frances;

"that you may be quite sure of—for who in his senses would quit all the *agremens* of life, and the society of those whom he most loves and admires, to be tossed about in a creaking ship without a chance of honour or glory during peace?"

"I am very glad," said Lady Katharine, "as far as I am concerned, that honour and glory are not taken into the present calculation—I shall be much more at ease about George while he has only the dangers of the sea to contend with, than I should if I were living in daily expectation of hearing of some desperate action, in which he was either to be killed or wounded."

By the tone in which the young lady spoke, it is pretty clear that she had always understood the engagement between her and George to have been concluded; and that she really believed the account which Lady Frances gave of her son's shyness and diffidence, and attributed his personal silence upon the subject to those particular causes. The composure, too, with which she discussed the oddity of appearance, which his sudden departure after their marriage would have, and the checking look which the Duchess gave her when she affected to pout about it, all would have proved to the careful observer that, however scant the proportion of love which his lordship might bring to the altar, it was quite sufficient to reciprocate the affections of his intended, who, although liking him extremely, had never been warmed by his attentions into any feeling of a tenderer nature, and who had persevered in her pursuit of him rather from pique than preference.

"I have done it, old gentleman," said his lordship to MacGopus, who came into his room almost immediately after Lady Frances had left it.

"What? —"

"Consented to the marriage with Lady Katharine," said his lordship.

"You have done a very foolish thing," said the Doctor, "but you could not help yourself."

"I have written to Wickins, Snell, and Sibthorpe, to send down forthwith."

"Quere? now—who are Wickins, Snell, and Sibthorpe?"

"My attorneys—one of them will be with us in a couple of days, or on the third at farthest."

"What d'ye want with attorneys?"

"Settlements."

"Oh!—ah! I had forgotten all the preliminaries," said the Doctor.

"I must have a serious conversation, I suppose, with the Duchess—or—I tell you what, my dear Mac—I will make

agreement not to touch upon business till the lawyer comes—he shall have the conversation.”

“What talk by attorney, eh? that’s not bad,” said the doctor.

“I’ll leave the whole arrangement to her Grace and the solicitor—I shall get another short respite and save a world of trouble—as to Katharine, I must be a little more gentle this evening, for after all she is a nice girl.”

“I for once agree with you, and I believe you really think so.”

“I should, but ——”

“Ah! ——”

“However, the plan I have hit on is the wisest—I fetter myself for life, all I have done is to lengthen my tether for a year or two.”

“All that I disapprove of,” said the Doctor, “however, you must have your way—you were always fond of a bit of romance—but I do think preferring a frigate to what you leave behind ——”

“What would you say if I gave it up then?”

“I would not give it up either,” said the Doctor.

“Then I’ll keep it.”

“Why, I don’t know, I’m not so sure about that.”

“Well, leave me to myself—let me have the next two clear days to consider my bearings, and I shall do—of course they will be glad enough to get back the ship, if I resign it, and say, that my marriage will interfere with my proposed arrangement, eh? ——”

“Take your own way—you have now got your own leave and your mother’s, and it is deuced hard if you can’t please yourself.”

“But while that one dear object rules here—here in my heart.”

“Psha!” said MacGopus, “come to luncheon—let me hear no more about hearts—you have made yourself quite tom-noddy enough about hearts—so let us go along and meet the ladies, and let me see you behave like a man;—recollect, that by this time, they know the whole history of the ship, and your proposed expedition—judge for yourself, and act for yourself—come—come away.”

Lord Weybridge so shortly destined himself to command, implicitly obeyed the Doctor, and the party were seated at luncheon when the conversation took the turn MacGopus had anticipated, and more was done in the way of forwarding the great business of the family in the next two hours, than had been effected in the last six weeks—indeed the conversation became so animated and easy, that Lady Katharine and Lord Weybridge began to arrive at little scoldings and recriminations, and she even went the length of insist-

ing upon his giving up his odious *Destructive*, of which he spoke of in the most glowing terms of enthusiasm, although he had never seen her ; as captains invariably do when talking of their craft, whether she be as short and as bluff-bowed as a collier, or as sharp and as choppy as a wedge.

Every thing was now settled, Lady Frances was in high spirits, Lady Katharine lively and gay, and George, who himself had announced the arrival of his lawyer on the succeeding Sunday, was in remarkably high spirits, which from their violence his mother feared were not altogether natural; and attributed to the sherry which he had swallowed at luncheon, rather than to the feelings of his heart, the vivacity he displayed, and the volubility with which he talked.

In a subsequent conversation between MacGopus and Lady Frances, they both agreed that they thought the chances were, he would give up the frigate ; that he seemed to have made up his mind to the step he was in some sort compelled to take, and that a little persuasion would induce him to make his election between Grosvenor-square and Severnstoke, with Lady Katharine and all his comforts, and his Majesty's ship *Destructive* cruising during a sharp winter, employed, perhaps, in overhauling the merchant ships of our allies, under the orders of a non-intervention ministry, or carrying out fresh beef to a bevy of traders, in the chops of the channel, during a hard frost. MacGopus promised her ladyship to open his eyes to the wildness of his nautical scheme, a service in which he was likely to be sincerely active, inasmuch as the noble lord had expressed his immoveable intention of pressing him into the service of accompanying him.

The next day's sitting for the picture—the last but two—was infinitely more lively and agreeable than any of the preceding ones had been. The ice was broken, and the betrothed pair felt themselves at liberty to talk prospectively, and build castles ; and Lady Katharine was less reserved, and infinitely pleasanter, than George had ever yet seen her. At dinner some of the smaller neighbours were invited, and the day passed off agreeably, and every thing looked smilingly.

The following morning George received a letter from Mr Lovell, in which, after acknowledging Lord Weybridge's last, he called his attention to an enclosure from Mrs Harbottle. It had cost her some hours to write, and she appeared greatly exhausted after she had concluded it. The cause of the delay in the answer to Lord Weybridge's letter, was the removal of the party across the country to Sidmouth. Mrs Harbottle had borne the journey much better than could have been hoped, but had continued in a sad state of weakness since their arrival at their new residence.

George opened the carefully sealed note from Fanny with deep interest, and read as follows :—

“ I am faint and weak, dear Lord Weybridge—much weaker and fainter than when you kindly came to see me. It is only by fits and starts that I can sit up to write this ; but I am anxious to do what I feel is my duty to the most deserving of God's created beings. I am speaking of dear, good Emma. She is struggling with feelings which will vanquish her before she can conquer them. No sigh escapes her—no tears fall from her eyes—but she is a martyr to an attachment which she has determined to overcome.

“ She will never relax—will never yield ; and her father—and where is there on earth a better man ?—supports her in her resolution. God forbid ! that I should say one word to prejudice you against your nearest relation ; but Lady Frances has been cruel to her—cruel far beyond her deserts. Could Emma feel that she entered your family on terms of equality, all would be well. Her attachment to you is unshaken—nay, believe me, stronger than ever. She speaks of you, and wonders when your marriage is to take place. Oh ! let it be never. The day may come—*will* come, when Miss Lovell may unhesitatingly advance her pretensions. *Be that my care.* I owe every comfort and consolation I possess in the world to her and her excellent father. Should I not be the most ungrateful of beings, if I did not secure her happiness ? I believe it to be in my power. I discredit the whole report of your intended marriage—the delay—the silence about it, convinces me it must be all a fabrication. I cannot, I am sure, remain long in this world ; consider this, then, dear Lord Weybridge ! as a dying request—continue to cherish the recollection of Emma, as she cherishes her regard for you, and rely upon it all will be well.

“ A thousand thanks are due to you for all your kindnesses to a distressed, wretched woman, whose hopes are blighted—whose heart is broken—and who seeks nothing but the grave as a passage to another and a better world. If you answer this, do not allude to what I have said of Emma. When I am *very* ill, I request her to open my letters and read them to me. I would not for the world have her know that I had touched upon this subject. Farewell, dear Lord Weybridge ! Remember my request—my advice—my prayer. Yours, truly,
“ F. H.”

This was an agreeable letter to receive just at the moment that he had concluded—now irrevocably—his union with Lady Katharine. The appeal of his most affectionate friend must go unattended to, and the voice from her deathbed be unheeded. It certainly seemed as if fate and fortune,

after having conspired to exalt and dignify the gallant Baron, had now clubbed to make him miserable. As to answering the letter, what earthly good could that do! The announcement of his marriage would follow so closely upon any thing he might offer by way of explanation, that it would be almost insulting to make any reply. One thing appeared evident by Fanny's letter, that she intended to secure the happiness of her friend as far as fortune was concerned, and that instead of having neglected to make a disposition of her property, as Lovell had feared, she had bequeathed so much of it to Emma as should give her rank in the aristocracy of wealth. What it meant, however, one way or another, mattered little to poor George, who was called away from an attentive perusal of this melancholy document, to join Lady Katharine in a ride.

A pretty moment! for such an invitation—with the entreaty of a dying friend in his pocket, not to forget the being who was entirely devoted to him, with his eyes half filled with tears, and his heart ready to burst, to be obliged to mount a great tear-away chestnut horse, and scamper over the turf with the betrothed of his heart, to whom he had engaged himself to be married next week, upon condition of sailing away from her, the week after!

Away they went, her ladyship in the highest possible spirits, and quite charming enough to have fascinated any body whose heart had been entirely free. Towards George all her extra gaiety was evidently misdirected, and on their return Lady Katharine could not avoid a remark that she thought Lord Weybridge had surprisingly relapsed into his old melancholy since the preceding evening. His mother, who knew he had received a letter from Mr Lovell, shrewdly suspected the cause of it.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn,
For by this light! whereby I see thy beauty,
Thou must be married to no man but me.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE situation in which Lord Weybridge was now placed, or rather in which he had placed himself, was perhaps as unenviable as his bitterest enemy could have wished. The effect produced by Mrs Harbottle's communication was not easily to be overcome, and when moreover it is recollected that, in addition to the ordinary amiabilities of the morning,

his lordship had to do the "honours" to the large party who had been invited to dinner that day, and to a "little dance" in the evening, it may naturally be imagined that his varied occupations demanded a more than usual share of attention.

To reply to Lovell by return of post was absolutely and indispensably necessary, his communication with regard to the duties of the executorship positively required it; but with respect to Fanny—what could he do? The more he considered her letter, the more he was convinced that she had made a disposition of her vast property in favour of Lovell and his daughter, and had done so without hinting at her proceedings to either of them; thus enhancing the value of her noble bequest by a delicacy the most refined, and a consideration the most generous. But of this he dare say nothing to her, because he was prohibited by her own injunctions from touching upon any subject which it might not be considered desirable to communicate to her affectionate friends. The same prohibition more particularly extended to any allusion to Emma, for Fanny had specially entreated him to take no notice whatever of any thing she had said in her letter, connected with that young lady. Of what, then, could his answer consist?—a mere acknowledgement of her letter? Would not this appear ungrateful for all the kind intelligence she had given him? Would it not appear apathetic and indifferent, where, in fact, all his dearest interests centred—interests, too, which he had on the very moment foregone—hopes that he had abandoned—happiness that he had rejected?

It seemed to him that the fairest—the honestest and the wisest course he could take, would be to announce to Lovell, in the least offensive manner possible, the approaching ill-omened marriage with Katharine, to which he had consented. In a week or two the newspapers would announce it to the world, and how unfeeling and base would it appear to let such a piece of intelligence meet the eyes of his still attached Emma through such a channel! It appeared to him to require more courage than he possessed to set about this work; however, it must be done, and after revolving in his mind the various means of doing it best, he decided upon confining his letter to Lovell to mere matters of business, and unburthening his heart to Fanny; and without referring to any thing she had said in her communication to him, with respect to Emma, state his case, with all the alleviating circumstances, so that if Emma did read her friend's letter, it would contain, in fact, as nearly as possible, every thing he desired to say to her upon the hateful subject, but which, after her resolution not to receive a line from him, he knew it would be useless to address to herself direct.

Lord Weybridge accordingly sat down, and wrote to Mrs Harbottle what follows :—

“ *Severstoke, Dec. 10, 1830.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—I received with gratitude your kind letter, and rejoice to find you sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of your last removal, to write so much at length. I do assure you that all my humble efforts to be useful, are amply repaid by the expression of your thanks. I only lament that the varied circumstances connected with the unfortunate—for so I sincerely call it—change in my position, have hindered me from more particularly evincing my desire to be of service. It gives me some consolation to know that your interests will in no degree suffer, while under the superintendence of our excellent friend Mr Lovell.

“ You will be surprised—as I am myself, and bewildered—to hear that I have been driven into the fulfilment of the marriage which my mother somewhat prematurely announced to our friends. Under a false impression, derived from misrepresentation and calumny, I hastily permitted a pledge to be given, which I have been called upon to redeem; and since I have been so severely punished by the decided rejection of the only being who ever could have made my happiness, I am careless of what is to happen to me.

“ I have not a word to breathe against Lady Katharine Hargrave, who is amiable, handsome, and accomplished; nor have I any one to blame but myself for the rashness with which I permitted myself to fall into the snares which my mother laid for me; to her conduct to Miss Lovell I attribute the resentment which has induced her to prohibit my again addressing her, and the excitement of that just, but as far as I am concerned, cruel pride, which led her to put a period to our acquaintance. That you may judge how far this marriage is a matter of my own choice, I must tell you, that in hopes of avoiding it, I have secured an appointment to a frigate, which will be ready for sea in three weeks or a month, and that failing in escaping the trammels which had been spread for me, and forced as I am, by what I am told honour and justice demand, into this, to me most wretched connexion, I propose quitting my home and my bride in the first week of what is *called* the honey-moon, to assume the command of my ship, and in the solitude of my station, devote myself to a sincere repentance of my follies, and to an earnest endeavour to reconcile myself to the lot—which I must admit has been partly my own election—but which never would have befallen me, if Emma could have forgiven my error, and overcome her own resentment.

"It is true I applied, in a moment of something like madness, for the command of the ship; my impression was, that my going on service would put an end to the affair with Lady Katharine—or rather the affair between my mother and the Duchess of Malvern; but I was deceived: then I imagined that my firm resolution to proceed to my ship as soon after the marriage as the service required, would have induced the contrivers of it to refuse its completion, under a condition which must make my indifference plain to the world. But no—they have determined that by the laws of society I am bound to fulfil an engagement which in fact I never entered into, and are satisfied to let it appear that my anxiety to serve my king and country, by cruising about the Channel during a profound peace, is paramount to every other feeling in my breast; and that the command of the vessel which I have got, instead of being obtained by special application from myself, has been a tribute of approbation of my professional merits bestowed by a new First Lord of the Admiralty, who never heard my name as a sailor, till I myself communicated it to him, and who now concedes to my parliamentary power what he would have denied to all my services, if they had been detailed to him.

"My state of mind I leave you to judge—rash and reckless of consequences, I have worked the ruin of all my brightest prospects, and have fallen a victim to the mistaken tenderness of a mother, whose false estimation of her son's merits and pretensions, has been the cause of all his faults and follies.

"To Mr Lovell I have said nothing on this hated subject—how can I? How can I admit myself to be capable of marrying one woman, with a heart devoted to another, and that other his excellent, exemplary child? Long—long may she live blest and happy in the consciousness of her own excellence! If I dare venture to entreat you to do so much—communicate to her the intelligence I now give, and which she must soon hear from other quarters—explain to her my wretchedness—endeavour to excite her pity for one who is doomed to renounce all tenderer feelings; the whole occurrence seems to me to be a dreadful dream, but alas! there is no waking from it.

"I have ill obeyed your injunctions, but the circumstances are imperative. In all your misfortunes I most deeply sympathize—let me claim a similar feeling from you. I hope to be away, and in the enjoyment of my own thoughts and recollections, in less than a month. If you can spare time, let me hear from you before my departure. I hope to hear better accounts of your health, of which, for the sake of your affectionate friends, you must indeed be careful. Upon all matters of your business I have written to Mr Lovell.

"Think of me as favourably as you can—recollect the trials I have undergone, and the extraordinary situations in which I have been placed; above all, assure yourself of my continued esteem, regard, and friendship." "W."

To attempt to describe the feelings of Mrs Harbottle, when she heard this letter—for after the caution she had given Lord Weybridge, she felt secure in permitting Miss Lovell to read it to her—or the agony of Emma in reading it, would be vain.

"Here, then," said Fanny, "are consummated two sacrifices. He is the victim of stratagem, and management, and persecution—and you, Emma, have overthrown every hope of your own, and killed every wish of mine, by a feeling of pride which you ought indeed to have mitigated, under all the circumstances of the case."

"Fanny," said Miss Lovell, "I have read this letter with much less emotion than you have discovered in listening to it. I was prepared for it. I intended, when I said so, to relieve him from all obligations to me—I made the sacrifice voluntarily and resolutely—I knew his happiness would never be secured, if he married contrary to his mother's wishes."

"And do you think," said Fanny, "that his happiness is insured by what has happened, or by the conclusion of this match with Lady Katharine?"

"I hope it eventually may be," said Emma, "but you see the intelligence Lady Frances so eagerly and somewhat officiously communicated to me, as to his intended marriage with the young lady, proves to be true, and you will recollect that at our meeting, and previous to his departure to visit you at Mopeham, he anxiously desired to renew that sort of conversation which I fortunately checked. Consider, Fanny, if I had encouraged the renewal of his addresses—if I had listened to his professions and protestations at that period, when as it now turns out he was actually under an engagement to Lady Katharine, what would have been my present position?"

"You would have been his wife," said Fanny; "nothing but your decided rejection of his addresses—nothing but your resolution not to subject yourself to the violence and pride of Lady Frances, and your anxiety not to separate the interests, or disturb the affections of the mother and son, hindered him from declaring and proclaiming you his choice."

"How would he have been placed, then, with regard to his present intended bride?" said Emma. "If I refused him then for my own honour's sake, I rejoice now that I did so for his. I have said a hundred times, I was quite aware of the activity of his mother's influence to carry her point about his marriage. I was sure, from knowing his disposi-

tion, and the power she has over him, that eventually—I knew not by what means it might be done—that influence would be successful: it has been so, and it is immaterial to both of us how it has so prospered. We are parted eternally, and so we should have been if this course had not been pursued; some other would have been tried, and after the violence of Lady Frances's expressions to me, in conversations upon the subject, I had resolved never to consent to a union with her son, without her full and entire consent. I felt confident it was not attainable; and, of course, that conviction was greatly strengthened when he was elevated to the peerage. All this I foresaw—all this I had made up my mind to endure—and now that the hour of trial is come, and all my forebodings are realized, thank God! I am prepared to meet my fate without a murmur."

It was not without some degree of astonishment, that the less determined Fanny witnessed the calmness and resignation of her poor young friend. Emma felt as deeply as a woman could, the blow she had received; but anger towards him who had fallen a victim to the trickery and hypocrisy to which filial affection had rendered him blind, mingled not in those feelings. Upon Lady Frances she rested all the blame, and considered her responsible not only for the misery she had already caused by separating two fond hearts, but for that, which was so likely to result from the uncongenial union she had arranged for two hearts indifferent to each other.

No tear fell from Emma's eyes, while Fanny lay absorbed in sorrow; and when her father joined them, and inquired if Lord Weybridge's letter to Mrs Harbottle contained any news of interest, his daughter placed it in his hands with the single simple observation, that all had happened at Severn-stoke that she had foretold.

"Unhappy man!" said Lovell, when he laid down his lordship's epistle; "he has fallen a victim to an easiness of temper, and a facility of credence, which are the strong characteristics of his mind. His belief in our misconduct would have been ungenerous, were not his mother sufficiently artful to impose upon wiser persons than her son; and his consent to his approaching marriage, under the circumstances he describes, is only another illustration of the same character. Heaven send him happy, but I fear for the success of my prayers, when I take into consideration, not only his own expression of dislike to the match, but the anxiety of the other parties, who, in the face of such evidence of distaste to it, seem resolved to hasten and conclude it, in a manner as little consistent with delicacy, as they must feel it to be in accordance with his own inclination."

It may be considered somewhat wrong in point of date, to submit this little conversation in this place; but as much is doing at Severnstoke, during the morning of the day of preparation for the festivities of the evening, it appeared not an unfavourable moment to snatch a glimpse at Sidmouth, to which place, as the reader has already been informed, the party had removed.

In this removal they had cause to be thankful, for the invalid had not been two days in her new residence before she sensibly felt and visibly exhibited strong marks of improvement in her health and strength. Lord Weybridge's letter, it is true, had the effect of exciting her, and checking the progress of her convalescence; for Fanny, whose mind was not quite so well regulated as Emma's, expressed herself in more worldly and womanly terms upon his conduct than Miss Lovell could have used, and seemed to feel his abandonment of her friend as a wound to herself, whom he had made the medium of the first communication, of his serious and honourable intentions respecting her.

One effect had been produced upon Lord Weybridge, by Fanny's letter, which eventually turned out to be an exceedingly important one. He had, up to the receipt of it, from the time he really consented to marry her ladyship, been thinking, that as he must fulfil that engagement, it would be useless and almost absurd to accept the command of the ship for which he had applied, and had gone to bed in the mind to write a very handsome letter of thanks to the Admiralty, stating that circumstances had occurred since his application for employment, which had altered his views, and therefore begging to decline the offered promotion, as far as the appointment was concerned, and at the same time expressing a wish for the promotion which had been promised him. The announcement of his marriage, so shortly after this letter, would explain what had happened to alter his views, and he should, like other Englishmen—"sit at home at ease"—and making the best of what he still thought a bad bargain, endeavour to reconcile himself to circumstances, and console himself for the scorn of one lady in the enjoyment of the kindness of another—but Mrs Harbottle's letter, painting to him the still smouldering passion of his deserted and outraged Emma, revived in his versatile mind all his dormant feelings of affection and devotion, and he tore the letter he had already written and almost despatched, and renewed his determination of flying to the Destructive, in the cabin of which ship, with a sentry at the door, he might be secure from all interruption, ruminate on past happiness, never to return, and as he said, moreover discipline his mind down to the enjoyment of a calmer and more rational existence with his noble lady on his return to shore.

What an ingenious creature is man—there is no situation in the world in which he cannot, by dint of his personal exertions, make himself perfectly miserable—and certainly of the examples of that sort of talent which we have ever met, Lord Weybridge appears to have been one of the most striking—letting it never be forgotten that his mother, whose whole aim through life was to secure his happiness, was the most able coadjutor in his efforts to be wretched.

There are two persons in the drama, whose conduct it must be admitted, notwithstanding their rank in the state must appear to be in the highest or rather lowest degree ungratified—and these persons are no other than the Duchess and her daughter—it is true we have had no opportunity of looking at their characters, *en deshabillé*, nor of judging their actions except by report. The Duchess was—as duchesses have been before, and will be again—a match-maker—she has been already noticed for her assiduous preservation of her daughters—(for

“ — Gammar she had five!”)

from George, in his earlier career, and was as remarkable in keeping men off,” whom she did not think desirable connexions, as she was indefatigable in “keeping them on” when she considered they were—Three of the Ladies Harcourt have made excellent marriages, and Lady Katharine and Lady Isabella, the youngest, were all that now remained in hand.

To say that Lady Katharine was an interested girl, would be to describe what, as I have already said, I believe never, if ever, very rarely exists. She had always admitted a liking for George, even when he was interdicted, and she herself snapped up, if she spoke three words to him. A very little love in these days, goes a great way, and the Duchess rejoiced in having an opportunity of gratifying the slight partiality Katharine had formerly evinced, when she found the object of it placed in a position where he had a right to command such a wife, and greatly excited and encouraged to perseverance by Lady Frances, who had been for more years than they either chose to own, her Grace's osom friend and associate, had made up her mind, *coute qui coute*, that her youngest daughter should be Lady Weybridge.

It was not to be supposed that either of the mothers—both of whom were perfectly aware of his pre-attachment to “the Parson's daughter”—were to be baffled in their designs by the absence of sentiment on the one side, or any symptoms of indifference on the other. Lady Frances wanted the connexion, which was illustrious—the Duchess required the fortune, which was ample, and thus the two prin-

cipals were left almost unconscious of the progress of the negotiations with which they were so intimately connected. In fact, Lady Katharine, as far as she was concerned, would as readily have consented to marry Captain Sheringham two years before, as she was now ready to unite herself with Lord Weybridge—and she was sincere in her regard for him, and quite delighted to find herself permitted to associate with him, upon terms of ease and freedom, so totally different from those which had been permitted before his elevation to the peerage, and his accession to so large a fortune.

It is necessary to say these few words in order to acquit the young lady from participating in the plot contrived by the "ancients."—She fell into all their schemes because it was agreeable to herself to do so, and if George had been more tenderly treated, and more gently managed by his mother, the devoutly-to-be-wished consummation of the affair would have been brought about with much greater facility. It was the excessive eagerness of Lady Frances which startled him, and her uncalled for coarseness towards poor Emma, which alarmed him; and the more he considered the means by which his consent had been obtained to the marriage, the more convinced he was, that as love is not to be purchased with gold, so is it not to be excited by compulsion. So it was, however, and so it was to be—Lady Frances thought that a duke's daughter was a very pretty alliance for a baron, with forty thousand a year, and the Duchess considered a baron with forty thousand a year a most desirable match for a duke's daughter, who had but five thousand pounds in all the world.

"Come, my lord," said MacGopus—"the first dinner bell will ring in a few minutes—you must go dress—be in time to receive your new visiters and neighbours."

"Hang it all," said George; "I wish this odious great overgrown party had been fixed for any other day than this. I have had many letters to write—much to do—none of it agreeable."

"I thought I saw your lordship and Lady Katharine in the library, looking very comfortable," said MacGopus.

"Trust not to appearances, my friend," said his lordship; "I am doubly unhappy whenever I am in her presence—unhappy because my heart is not mine to give her—and more unhappy still that it is not, because I really believe she is a very excellent and amiable girl."

"Stick to that opinion for a little, and you'll think better of her yet," said the Doctor.

"No—there can be no such thing as divided affection," said Lord Weybridge.

"She has a claim—or soon will have, upon your affection undivided."

"What are her claims compared to those of the being I have deserted?"

"You have done no such thing," said the Doctor; "she has discarded you."

"Aye, aye, but how provoked?"

"By your own proposal to another!"

"Spare me all this," said Lord Weybridge; "you see before you one of the most unhappy of human beings. Why did fate ever ordain that I should succeed to all this rank and fortune, to rob me of her whose affections would have been more valuable to me than either."

"That's nonsense," said MacGopus; "Lady Frances would have had just as much objection to her marrying you as you were, as she has to her marrying you as you are; and therefore your rank and fortune have nothing to do with it, or if they have, they ought to have given you power and independence to do exactly as you pleased, and marry whom you liked."

"Job's comforter, hold that infernal croaking," said George—when I get you aboard the Destructive ——"

"You never will," said MacGopus, "for you'll never set foot in her yourself.—Tut man, as your mother says, what will the world say if you marry this fine handsome bonnie lassie, and go to sea the next week?"

"Why—they will say that I am doing my duty," said Lord Weybridge.

"Quite the contrary, my lord," said the Doctor.

"I am called into service."

"No—you ask for employment."

"I have got my promotion, or condition of serving."

"A mighty great deal of consequence it must be to you," said the Doctor; "with your peerage and fortune, and all the rest of it, whether you die a commander or a captain—no—give up that mad scheme."

"As I do not agree in its madness, I most certainly shall not abandon it—I love my profession."

"You must have wonderfully altered then, since you were in the Old Elephant," said the Doctor—"for saving your lordship's presence, a lazier hand I never had the pleasure of seeing on board any of his Majesty's craft than Lieutenant Sheringham."

"Would I were there again!" said his lordship.

"I wish you were," said the Doctor, "and I had your fortune—how happy we two should be."

"Come—there's the bell," said Lord Weybridge—"now for this 'solemn mockery' of receiving a set of people for whom I care nothing, in order to keep up a society in which I never mean to join, to be followed by an influx of half the

county, to support what my mother calls my political influence which I never mean to exercise."

"Now, my lord," said MacGopus, "I have just one word to say—you must not suppose I have been retained by Lady Frances to worry you or prescribe rules for your conduct—but do, for your own sake—for the sake of appearances do be civil and attentive to Lady Katharine before the company—you would not wish either to degrade or distress her."

"Why, doctor, this is a new start you have taken," said his lordship, "turned lecturer upon high breeding, the nobleman's guide to good manners."

"Psha," said MacGopus, "I know nothing of high breeding—I don't profess it—but I know what good feeling is—I saw that poor girl last night half in tears at something you said—which you did not intend to wound her—but it did."

"But how can I force myself to be tender," said George, "I esteem her—I admire her—would you have me sigh and gaze upon her, and weep, and kneel, like an actor on the stage."

"Ugh—no," said the Doctor, "I hate the sight of such monkeyish absurdity—gaze you need not in company—because you can look at her when you please—but be gentle to her—recollect the relative situation in which she stands to you—it is not *her* fault, that your Emma has been offended—she has had no share in your repulse—be advised by me."

"Your counsel has assumed a new character," said George, "and convinces me that you are more inexplicable than I before thought you—what has made you take such a wonderful interest in Lady Katharine—is it the true instinct—is it because she is a Duke's daughter?"

"I shall answer none of your questions," said MacGopus, "nor reply to any of your quibbles—she is a woman, that's one reason for my advice—she is to be *your* wife, and that's another reason for my advice—and rely upon it, the only way to make the woman you love respected, is to show respect to her yourself."

"Love!" said his lordship.

"Well—ought to love—I ask pardon," replied MacGopus—"ought to love—because you will be sure to do so, in a few days."

"Oh! come, come, come," said Lord Weybridge, "give me my candle, let me go dress. If my Mentor lectures so unconsciously, I shall run stark staring mad—watch me this evening, and see how prettily I behave—but mind—however satisfied you may be with my deference to your advice, do not to morrow morning triumph over me, and accuse me of having forgotten my ———"

"——Parson's daughter," said the Doctor.

And so they parted. Lord Weybridge really astonished

even moved at the very unexpected appeal which the doctor had made. To say truth, although he affected to be moved by it, it gave him a higher opinion than he ever yet of MacGopus, who, in the practice of a course of connection and interruption, grown into a habit from his long long been the Dictator, first of the gun-room, and of ward-room afterwards, the protector of midshipmen, the confidant of his comrades, exhibited a generosity of sentiment, and a tenderness of feeling towards a young, feeble, and sensitive being, placed in a situation of extreme secrecy, which would have done credit to many, who fill the world with their professions and pretensions, but who for want of true kindness and innate benevolence, must strike their hands to the rough, good-hearted, provoking MacGopus.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Duncan sleeps here to night,”
 ——— “When goes he hence?”
 “To-morrow as he purposes.”

SHAKESPEARE.

read of lambs decked out for sacrifice, and Indian women dressed in all their costly array, in order to be burned on the side of their late highly respected and very much lamented husbands, but never were greater pains taken to decorate such orgies with becoming splendour than were bestowed upon the initiatory *fete* at Severnstoke upon the memorable day, it is now our duty to record. Never did a devoted widow behold the Kussumba-dyed robe in which she was destined to expire, with greater horror than George observed the gaities in progress, nor could the Saffron and Clove prescribed by Krishna be more palling to her fevered eyes, than were the preparations which were on every side being for the festival, which was to exhibit him and his friends, to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. But he was destined to fight a desperate domestic battle ere the commencement of the banquet—like a good free-lance he was doomed to labour hard, before refreshment, at awful odds with his mother, and all his domesticated aids against him, upon a question in which it was clear he would be left in a glorious minority of one. His joint attack was commenced after luncheon, at a good hour when the troops were invigorated and in high spirits, was opened by Lady Frances, who having announced the determination of the party not to leave George at rest until

he had conceded the point they wished to carry, told him in plainer terms than any body else perhaps could have ventured to do, that if he persisted in his scheme of going to sea so shortly after his marriage, the world would set him down for a madman.

"My dear mother," said George, and he began in such a tone that her ladyship was terrified, lest he should be provoked to say something which would even *then* upset all her arrangements and break off the match, "every man has his peculiar feelings—you yourself are the strongest, and loudest advocate for the fulfilment of pledges, and the observance of honourable duties. I am pledged to my king and country to serve them whenever I am called upon, and ———"

"But," said MacGopus—"you were not called upon to do any such thing."

"We wont dispute that point," said Lady Frances, who dreaded, lest the Duchess, who did not at all like the ship affair, should discover what her ladyship had carefully concealed from her, namely that it was at George's own solicitation he was employed; "all I am sure of, is, that under the circumstances it will have the strangest appearance in the world."

"You have the choice of two evils," said Lord Weybridge, "either I must have my own way, or we must postpone the marriage till my return."

"What!" said the Duchess, "have you the conscience to wish poor Katharine to wear the willow for three years! Oh cruel, Lord Weybridge!"

"Come, my lord," said MacGopus, "write a handsome refusal to the first lord—you might vote with them as it is, for the intentional kindness, and they can job the Destructive for some other support, and they will give you your post rank, and never stop to inquire your motive so as they get the frigate back again."

"*Et tu Brute!*" said George—"are *you* against me—*you*, who first taught me to love the service?"

"We are all against you," said the Duchess, "it is a subject I cannot bear to touch upon, when Katharine is in the room, for she feels it deeply. She told me only last night that it gave her an idea that you felt yourself bound to marry her, that you would fulfil the engagement as a matter of duty, and then show the world how little inclination had to do in the affair, by quitting your disconsolate bride upon the expiration of half the honey-moon."

"Why really, Duchess," said George —

"I know exactly what you are going to say," interrupted Lady Frances, who sat in an agony of alarm lest George should be too candid—"but we will hear no arguments."

“That’s the safest way, my lady,” said MacGopus, “and saves conversation—if the House of Commons were to decide first and debate afterwards, it would mightily facilitate the carrying on of public business. One thing, my lord, I am bound to tell you, and that is, I have promised Lady Frances not to accompany you in any character.”

“I can do without you,” said his lordship—somewhat angry at the sudden conversion of his quondam supporter.

“But now, really, Lord Weybridge,” said the Duchess, “let me seriously ask you is it impossible to get off with honour?”

“Why,” said Lord Weybridge, looking very significantly at his mother, “I—I am told not—I repeat therefore that I am prepared to do what I believe to be my duty.”

“Are you fond of the sea?” said the Duchess.

“Not he ma’am,” said the Doctor.

“Come now,” said Lady Frances, “be rational—be dutiful, and if you are so punctilious about duty—recollect your mother—have I no claims upon you?—you know that my whole life has been one of constant solicitude for your welfare and happiness—I am amply repaid by the circumstances that have occurred during your growing up!”

“To wit, the lubberly yachting in the Mediterranean,” said MacGopus, taking an unusually large pinch of snuff.

“To the dispensations of Providence, sir,” said Lady Frances, gravely, and rather angrily, “we must bow; I am speaking now of my son’s conduct through life to his only parent. Never, till the present occasion, have I had a request unattended to, or a desire uncomplied with by him, and I do think it hard that upon a point where the difficulty lies rather in the contradiction to my wishes, I may not expect a deference to them.”

“I assure you, my dearest mother,” said Lord Weybridge, “as I scarcely need do, that your wish is to me law. I feel a delicacy upon the point under discussion which —”

“Which surely, my dear Lord,” said the Duchess, “ought, in courtesy, to yield to the delicacy my poor child feels in hearing your preference for the service to her society made so evident, that it must naturally become a topic of conversation wherever our families are known.”

“Come, my lord,” said MacGopus, “recollect what I said to you upon the same subject last night. Sacrifice this little vanity, or chivalry, or whatever it may be which would set you adrift upon the salt sea, and complete the happiness of those who honour and value you, by settling yourself down amongst your connexions, your neighbours, and your tenants, doing good, as your excellent heart will prompt you, and receiving the tributes of affection and gratitude which

they will be ready to proffer. Surely, that will be better, with a lovely wife into the bargain, than beating about the Land's End through the winter, or reaching, by way of a treat, after a gale of wind, that most appropriate retreat, the Isles of Scilly."

"There is no standing this combined attack of wit and beauty," said George, who, to tell truth, had himself begun to think it perhaps wisest, after all, to conform himself to the comforts, if not pleasures, of domestic life; "all I ask, therefore, is a truce—we have a great deal to do to-day—let me only demand four and twenty hours' delay. The appeal of my mother, seldom made to me in vain, has had its effect: a day's procrastination of my letter to the Admiralty will do no harm, and I think the chances are, if you all behave well to me this evening, that I may abandon my scheme. I shall do so with regret, because it looks trifling and fickle—one day to seek —"

"Oh! never mind what it looks," said Lady Frances, again checking his explanation of how he had obtained the appointment; "leave that to us. Depend upon one thing, that nothing can look so ill as the sudden abandonment of your wife, immediately after marriage."

"He'll come round to our way of thinking to-morrow," said the Doctor, "I see he relents."

"I am certain Katharine's happiness is at stake," said the Duchess.

"Mine most assuredly is," added Lady Frances.

"Well," said his lordship, "I have said; give me a respite till breakfast time to-morrow, and you shall hear my final decision."

And in this way he pushed off the hour in which he was to make his election. It was true he acted upon impulses, and was, moreover, suddenly acted upon; the letter of Mrs Harbottle had completely unhinged and overturned him—then came his resolution to abandon Katharine—now he felt satisfied that Lady Katharine did care about him, and saw that her mother's pride was wounded by his proposed excursion, and his own mother's happiness very much concerned in it. He saw, too, that all chance of averting the calamity of marriage was passed; the bridal dresses were preparing, and the lawyer was, in all probability on the road, to prepare the settlements, and it therefore seemed probable, unless some new event should arise to give his mind an opposite direction, that he would cleave to the Katharine of twenty, and abandon the Destructive of forty-four.

And soon commenced the bustle—the carriages began to arrive—the guests to alight, and the grooms of the chamber to usher them in; the dinner-party was swollen to twenty-five, and amongst them were people of strange

s, and strange manners; few amongst the two dozen were on the Duchess's London list, and fewer still to Lady Frances, whose connexions all lay north- and who had for many years never affected to keep st whatever, except, indeed, of engagements which ad made at the houses of other people.

thing, possibly, could be more cold, stiff, awkward, and comfortable, than the whole affair. Lady Frances had ed the guests, and they made, thus formed together, ost incongruous mass imaginable. The leading tory f the county was seated next the wife of the most inte whig baronet, whose eldest son had been defeated last general election, by what the baronet thought : to call the unconstitutional interference of his Lord-

A general officer was placed next the lady of a count- entleman, whose sister he had carried off from her nd; and a matured girl of thirty-one divided two men, whom had been shot in a duel by her brother, for broken a promise of marriage he had made to her ears before, and whom she had never since seen, and her a sporting colonel, who had won the whole of her rother's fortune at play, in consequence of which he en living in Paris ever since the year 1824.

ese were but a few of the mishaps and misfortunes of y; every thing seemed to go wrong, and George, who e strange Countess on his right hand, and Lady Ka- e on his left, appeared to as little advantage as ever l in his life. He speedily saw the error into which ad fallen in making up their party without a proper *du pay*, and most fervently wished himself pacing the ard side of the quarter deck of H. M. S. Destructive. dinner there was very little talking, and when the retired, that which did duty for conversation chiefly l upon local affairs, in which no two people present d to agree; this added to the necessity of referring to e for opinions upon subjects with which he had not ouble his head, and therefore knew nothing of, made ombination of miseries which were only terminated e announcement of coffee—an announcement not however, until after the increased noises, and the of many voices in the hall and ante-room, proclaimed any of the refreshers had arrived.

scene in the drawing-rooms was as gay as such ; usually are, and, no doubt, to four or five couple of in the party, every thing seemed very delightful. ooms were well lighted, and prettily arranged, and if had been two or three hundred people more, would een almost brilliant. The party was just too large sociable, and much too small to be easy. Dancing,

which began a little after ten, broke the formality, and thawed the English coldness, which stiffened most of the visitors. There was a sprinkling of rural beauty, and one or two "Almack's" faces, looking fresher and brighter than they were wont to appear towards the end of a London season. The officers of a crack Hussar regiment quartered in the adjacent town, tipped and tufted, made the floors clatter with their arms and accoutrements, and before eleven the intellectual part of the company were in full motion.

The scene grew livelier as the evening wore on, and George, who had for a moment thrown himself into a huge comfortable chair, contemplated it with a sort of mystified feeling. He found himself accidentally in the possession of all this splendour—capable at his beck of congregating round him every thing presentable in the neighbourhood—possessing vast influence in the county, with every fair prospect of uninterrupted happiness, marred only by the doubt and difficulty he felt about his marriage. Lady Katharine saw his abstraction, and gliding sylph-like across the room, seated herself by his side. She spoke sweetly and gently to him, and he thought at the moment that he ought to be happy in the possession of so lovely and so accomplished a wife! It was ungracious—ungrateful to maintain a coldness and indifference to a being who really appeared devoted to him, and he conversed with her with pleasure. There was a soft and melting tenderness in the expression of her countenance that had never struck him before: in fact, he had resolved to abandon the Destructive long before this ten minutes' tête-à-tête was over.

He danced with her, and the visitors admired the handsome pair. Her dancing was perfection. He led her to the refreshment-room, and the envious eyes of the women, and the approving looks of the men hung upon the fair creature, as she leant upon her future husband's arm. Lady Frances was right in making up the party; it drew Lady Katharine out—it excited and animated her, and it did one thing much more important still—it showed to George how much she was an object of admiration in the eyes of others.

Just before supper, Lord Weybridge was summoned from the saloon to receive a visiter, whose arrival at that precise period was certainly unexpected. He obeyed the summons, and proceeded to his morning-room, where he found the new arrival anxiously waiting his approach. His surprise when he saw his guest was great and unaffected; however, the nature of his communication was such as to engross all his thoughts, and claim all his attention.

That the individual who appeared so unexpectedly under his roof might at any time have come thither; nay, if he had only delayed his visit—or rather visitation—for two

days, his appearance would neither have surprised nor agitated him ; but when George entered the room, and beheld him, it was like a vision.

It was evident to Lord Weybridge, the moment he saw his friend, that nothing but business of the most urgent and important nature could have brought him there. He was right in his conjectures, and upon that business George and his friend had a full hour's conversation, during which time all sorts of inquiries were made, in the gay circle, for the master of the house, but in vain ; and when his retreat was discovered, equally vain were all attempts to draw him from it. At last the dialogue terminated, and the visiter, at his own desire, fatigued by his journey, and not prepared for mixing in the gaities going on, retired to rest, it having been agreed between him and George that all matters of business between them should be postponed till the morning : the visiter, indeed, apologizing for his unexpected intrusion upon the festivities, and regretting very much that he had not been aware of the party, so as to have timed his arrival more appropriately.

When George returned to his company, his appearance was totally changed—he looked reckless and wild—became abstracted—attended to no one, but stood as in a dream, or a trance, gazing at all that was passing before him. Lady Frances saw the change which had occurred—she inquired the cause—he told her—“Nothing.”

She thought she knew who the newly arrived visiter was, and laid the abstraction and apparent despondency of George to the account of the approach of the formalities which were necessary to the conclusion of his matrimonial engagement. She then suspected that Mrs Harbottle, of whose illness she was aware, was dead, and that more journeys, and more worries, as her ladyship considered them, were to be inflicted upon him ; but he told her that she was mistaken—that he *was* worried, but that he had determined to cast aside care till the morning. This, however, was easier said than done, and when he took the Duchess to supper—who at dinner had graciously condescended to yield her precedence to the stranger Countess—he seemed wholly absorbed in thoughts, which, to judge by the sudden convulsive twitches of his features, were any thing but agreeable.

During supper he spoke not, and the Duchess in vain endeavoured to rally him. She joked with him, and told him she supposed his melancholy arose from being separated from Katharine, who was sitting nearly opposite to him, looking with pleasure and condescension to one of the well dressed men of war who was placed beside her.

The reply which George gave to this suggestion was a look which implied ten thousand times more than the Duchess

suspected. "Ah, Duchess!" said he, in a tone of affected heedlessness, "I shall sail in the Destructive yet."

The Duchess, who herself thought Katharine was rather exceeding the limits usually placed to the flirtations of an *affiancée*, was convinced that George was actually jealous: this delighted her, because as there can be no effect without cause, so she concluded there could be no jealousy without love; and accordingly to gratify him, as she thought breaking up the party would, she whispered to him that she thought they had sat long enough, and rising from her seat, was immediately followed by all the rest of the guests, the majority of whom voted her Grace extremely disagreeable for shortening the season of such agreeable communication.

Little did the poor Duchess know what was passing in her neighbour's thoughts at the moment that she endeavoured to secure his peace of mind by removing Katharine beyond the range of Major Evelyn's fire—little did she anticipate what was so nearly happening, or rather little did her Grace imagine what had actually happened.

George continued some time at table, and rallied around him some of the more sober-minded men whose "dancing days" were past, and who chose to sacrifice to Bacchus rather than propitiate Terpsichore: he himself drank more than was his custom; but all in vain, if raising his spirits were the object—it seemed as if a load of immoveable weight had been laid upon him; and those of the party who had not the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with him, set him down as very well for a lord of the land, but deadlively as a landlord.

All this went on until it grew vastly late, and people wondered at the rapid flight of time, and "who could have fancied it five?" and "how delightful it was!" and what a "charming party it had been!" and then came a sort of breakfast with which the shattered and fatigued dancers again refreshed themselves previous to their final separation for the night, or rather morning.

And at last they went, and George's aching eyes followed the departing train, and he stood lost in thought as the doors of Severnstoke closed upon the last of his guests.

"George," said his mother, "what is the matter with you—who is it that has arrived here—is it Mr Lovell?"

"Mr Lovell," said George; "no, my dear mother; if we wait for visitors till Mr Lovell comes here, grass will grow on the threshold of Severnstoke."

"Who is it then?"

"There's no mystery in the man or his message," said George; "the interesting unknown is neither more nor less than my solicitor, Mr Snell, from London."

"Oh!" said her Ladyship, "why how foolish I was not

"I have guessed. You wrote to him to come here—and to think that I should have puzzled myself about such nonsense!"

"I did write to him, certainly," said George; "but as it was impossible even with all the excellent regulations of our admirably conducted post-office that he could have received my letter—my bidding did not bring him hither."

"Come, come, George," said Lady Frances, "you must ally from this sort of feeling; the settlements must be drawn, and why assume this air of abstraction and sorrow?"

"Settlements!" said George: "come, come, let us to bed. Has the Duchess retired, and Lady Katharine? Poor girl—'tis hard upon her."

"I think so, upon my word," said Lady Frances; "and you should consider ——"

"We'll put off consideration till the morning," said George. "Come—good night, my dear Lady Frances."

"Well but, George," said her ladyship, "hasn't it been a nice party?"

"Yes, latterly," said his lordship. "The dinner was what I call angular—the guests did not seem to me to dovetail; however, the ball was gay and pretty."

"The next dinner you give, George, we will select better," said Lady Frances. "We will have up the local lawyer who knows the county politics, and all the friends and foes of the district."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said George with a laugh almost sepulchral in its tone, "my next dinner I dare say will be a mighty fine affair. Good night."

"Heaven bless you, George," said her ladyship. "I wish I could cure you of the gloom."

"Cure! Oh," replied George, laughing with a ghastly expression on his countenance, and looking as pale as death, "it will all cure itself soon enough. I am pledged to my friend to say nothing to-night ——"

"—And *that* no doubt," said MacGopus, who entered the room at the moment, "is the reason why your lordship will stay up talking with Lady Frances till the sun drives you to bed for very shame."

"My lordship," said George, "will do no such thing. My lips are sealed; but when the seal is broken and morning comes, I think at all events I shall have the merit of surprising even you, who are never astonished at any thing. Come, let us part—to bed—"

"Once more, good night."

And so they went—each his way—wondering each after his fashion. A few hours put a stop to all their conjectures,

and reduced their vague and wavering doubts to a most positive certainty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

———Prepare to hear

A story that will turn thee into stone.
 Could there be hewn a monstrous gap in nature,
 A flaw made through the centre by some God,
 Through which the groans of ghosts might strike thine ear,
 They would not wound thee as the story does.

DRYDEN and LEE, in *Edipus*.

WHETHER George actually went to bed or not, matters little; that he did not sleep is an unquestionable fact. He had spared his mother a night's rest, or at least the rest which as much or rather as little of the night as was left might afford her; for himself he cared little—for her every thing—and there was much for her to bear, much to endure, and in all probability much to suffer.

Long before the ladies were stirring, Mr Snell and George were together. Their conversation was deeply interesting, and in the course of it, various questions arose as to the best manner of making a very important communication to Lady Frances, so as to prevent any serious effects from its suddenness or its general character. At last it was agreed that she should be summoned to a council after breakfast, and that Mr Snell himself should undertake to break to her what her son, knowing the acuteness of her feelings, and indeed the violence of her temper, had not the courage to impart.

What the conduct of the Duchess was likely to be, or what the sensation of Lady Katharine, when the discovery was made, formed an important although a secondary consideration in George's mind. It was known beyond a doubt that a storm was brewing, and that an event was to be announced, not calculated upon in the slightest degree either by the calculating Duchess or the managing Lady Frances.

The lawyer suggested admitting MacGopus into council immediately, because from the intimacy which, he saw, subsisted between him and George, he felt that he was worthy of their confidence; but his client refused this proposition, feeling assured that the safest way would be, to let his mother first into the secret, and let her circulate it after her own fashion.

The breakfast party did not assemble till noon, and then Lady Katharine did not "show." Her mother had, as it

appeared, given her a lecture upon the unguarded manner in which she had permitted herself to flirt with Major Evelyn, and declared to her that all the unhappiness of Lord Weybridge at supper and after it, had arisen from the distress of mind which her conduct had occasioned. Katharine who, on the contrary, felt perfectly conscious of her own innocence in the affair, argued the point with her noble mother most learnedly, and pleaded general usage, as a justification of her common-place civility to a very agreeable person. The conflict, however, had been serious, and as her Grace had told her that George had more than indirectly noticed it—which the reader knows he never did—she resolved to have a convenient head-ache, and not expose herself to the annoyance of any remarks upon her past conduct, or to the degradation of appearing to endeavour to make the *amende* for her fault.

"Mr Snell," said Lady Frances, when they were seated at breakfast, "don't you think George has done a great deal in the way of improvement here, considering how short a time he has had the place?"

"I think he has, my lady," said Mr Snell, who my-lorded and my-ladied every body who happened to have a title, like a footman.

"Next year, he means to break through the old avenue, and so bring out the Church Tower as a terminus to the vista."

"Yes, my lady," said Snell, with a very odd look.

"I assure you," continued her ladyship, buttering her little bit of toast with the whitest of hands, on the four fingers of which were at least a score of rings, "that I am extremely happy to see you here—and upon such an occasion—"

"Yes, my lady," replied the lawyer, with a look still stranger than the last.

"You seemed quite to have upset poor George last night," said her ladyship. "He hates business—but of course in his station of life, a man must undergo a great deal of that sort of boring work. How you manage it I cannot understand. I remember the day I was at your chambers with George—the dark, dirty holes you live in. Were you ever in a lawyer's chambers, Duchess?"

"No," said the Duchess, "I don't think I ever was. I have been in the Chancellor's room in the House of Lords."

"Oh dear!" said Lady Frances, "that's quite different:—these chambers are down in areas, or up in garrets, and as dark and dirty as possible—and all around them are stuck great brown canisters, with their clients' names painted on them, just like the things you see in grocers' shop windows, labelled Pekoe, Bohea, Hyson, and Twankey."

"Your ladyship gives a very accurate account of our dens," said Snell.

"I remember," continued her ladyship, "poor dear Lady Stote used to take me when I was quite a girl, whenever she went on an expedition to her lawyer—and there we used to be—first of all the man—the gentleman—I mean that is—the lawyer used to come out and talk at the window of the carriage—and then he used to get into the carriage and talk—and then she would pull out twenty or thirty letters, all tied up with red tape—and then, after reading them all over, she would get out of the carriage, and go into the chambers, and leave me till it grew quite dark, waiting for her return."

"Ladies, my lady," said Snell, "are our most persevering clients—and I need scarcely say, our most agreeable ones."

"Oh dear!" said the Duchess, in a tone of contemptuous civility, "how very gallant!"

"Mr Snell," said George, "has some business to call your attention to, Lady Frances, after breakfast."

"Oh, I know," said her ladyship; "so does the Duchess—I think at least she can guess."

"I should think not," said George.

MacGopus, who disliked strangers, and hated lawyers, spoke little or none—but he supplied by action what he spared in words, and devoured hot kidneys, cold beef, eggs innumerable, and, as the French say, *pain à discrétion*.

"When can your ladyship spare us half an hour?" said George to his mother.

"Whenever you please."

"Snell, what say you," said George, "to fixing our business after luncheon—the delay will not inconvenience you?"

"Not in the least," said the lawyer; "to-day—to-morrow —"

"Oh, no," said Lady Frances; "let us strike while the iron's hot—I hate delays—especially in matters like that which we have in hand."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said George, rising from table, "my poor dear mother! how little do you know what you are going to hear?"

"Nothing disagreeable, I am sure," said Lady Frances.

"Why," said George, "*cela depend*—whatever it is, it did not very much exhilarate me last night."

"I have settled all that, Lord Weybridge," said the Duchess; "you know what I mean."

"Upon my honour," said George, "I don't."

"Never mind—all is smoothed—the path shall be strewn with flowers," said her Grace.

"I rejoice to hear it," said George.

"Now remember," said Lady Frances, "and let no other

business prevent it—write about the odious ship—do it civilly—but decline it —”

“Wait, my dear mother, wait,” said her son. “That ship must not be given up so hastily. Mark my words —”

“Never, Lord Weybridge?” said the Duchess, who still believed that Katharine’s conduct had revived the idea of his romantic cruise. “Assure yourself —”

“I can assure myself of few things, Duchess,” replied he; “but of this, I think, I *can* assure myself, that before the bright sun, which now beams on high, buries himself in the blue sea, you will as entirely agree with me, as to my taking that voyage, as my mother yesterday agreed with your Grace upon the expediency of abandoning it.—But no more of this. At two we will have luncheon, at three, my Lady Frances, our conference—and at four —”

“Well,” said her ladyship.

“*Nous verrons*,” replied her son, with a very significant look.

The lawyer and his client quitted the breakfast room to talk—MacGopus proceeded to the library to read, and the ladies went to visit Lady Katharine.

Lady Frances, who knew every turn in her son’s mind, became much excited and agitated, when she saw, in its faithful index his honest countenance, marks of feelings ill in accordance with what she supposed would be the subject-matter of their three o’clock conversation. She now began to dread that he had determined to marry Emma, in spite of every obstacle—that he considered it the most marked and decided manner of establishing the preference which he scarcely endeavoured to conceal; and that, by committing what she could not but consider the grossest possible outrage of which man could be guilty, he would at once annihilate the hopes of Lady Katharine, and defy the consequences.

The Duchess, too, had confided the little history of her daughter’s flirtation to Lady Frances, who received the information with regret and apprehension, believing in the view her Grace had taken of it, and knowing how sensitive her son was upon such points—yet she controlled herself, and subdued her apprehensions, and talked over the conditions of the settlement which had been previously arranged, and told the Duchess that she might rely, upon the present occasion, upon her taking care that, in the draft which was no doubt to be made that day, Katharine should be perfectly satisfied with her exertions for her comfort and advantage.

An *attachée* of *M. Maradan Carson* was expected in the evening, with *échantillons* of all the most fascinating and bewitching articles of taste and fashion, for the bridal dress; and at her ladyship’s request, the diamonds, which George

most religiously regarded as family property, were laid before Lady Katharine in the best possible order of arrangement, as they were to be presented to her by her future husband in the evening.

"As for my part, dear Lady Frances," said the Duchess, "I do confess—God knows I have no undue ambition—that I scarcely hoped to be able to marry Catharine so delightfully well. Lord Weybridge is so superior—so accomplished—so well principled—so noble in his disposition—that if he were nobody, I should consider him an excellent husband for any daughter of mine."

"Yes," said Lady Frances, "he is a good creature—so extremely kind to me—so considerate. Now this ship affair—you'll see how it will end;—he will sigh about his odious frigate for an hour or two, but depend upon it, without another word, his letter of refusal goes to town to-night."

And so this pair of mothers went on praising their own dear children in a strain highly commendable in parents; and they were so happy, and so fond of each other, and so amiable, that it was clear nothing in this world could divide their interests, change their opinions, or disturb their intimacy.

At luncheon Lady Katharine appeared—she was all softness, tenderness, and languor;—her head-ache was so oppressive, and *Eau de Cologne* was so refreshing, and the party had been so agreeable—but there were some bores—some of those officers of the Hussars, were excessively disagreeable. Lady Katharine really thought that one of them must have drank too much wine—he worried her to death—and so on—and then she sipped a little sherry and water, and re-invigorated herself—and the carriage was ordered at half past three—and Lady Frances and George, and the lawyer, retired to George's room.

"Sit down, my dear mother," said George, "and prepare yourself to hear something which I am quite sure, even with your felicity of imagination, you are not prepared to guess at."

"Answer me, George," said Lady Frances, "is it connected with Binford—with your marriage?"

"It is connected," said her son, "and intimately connected, not only with Binford, but with Severnstoke, and with my marriage most certainly—it is, moreover, connected with my personal character and with the place and station which I hold in society."

"What can you mean?"

"I mean, my dear mother," said George, "that a blow is about to fall upon us—or rather has fallen, in which we ought to rejoice as Christians, but which at once dissipates all the splendour with which we are surrounded—sends the

Duchess out of doors—and bears away the blooming Lady Katharine—melts all our plate—dissolves our diamonds—crops all our trees—and strips us of a home.”

“How?—”

“Why, neither more nor less than this; we are here only on sufferance, and must go hence at the call of mine excellent lawyer Mr Snell.”

“How should he or any body else drive Lord Weybridge from his titles or estates.”

“Prepare yourself for it,” said George, “I tell you ’tis a blow—I am not Lord Weybridge.”

“Not Lord Weybridge?—What then?”

George had sprung the mine; he was too much affected to follow it up—he jumped up from his chair and turned his face to the window.

“What do I hear?” said Lady Frances.

“So it is, my lady,” said Snell; “I have here the narrative of the circumstances forwarded and attested by the English Minister at Naples.”

“Who claims my son’s title?” said her ladyship; “what does it mean?”

“The eldest son of the late lord,” said Snell, “who, by something like a miracle, escaped from the catastrophe which engulfed the rest of his family.”

“What proofs are there of this?”

“Enough, my dear mother,” said George, “the real Lord Weybridge, which I am not, is on his way to London *via* Paris—his escape was wonderful.”

“When the ship struck the yacht,” said Snell, “the present lord was in the act of stepping upon deck—he describes the shock as violent and instantaneous, something beyond description awful. In the crash—momentary as it was—instinct prompted him to catch hold of something—he seized a rope, which struck him in the collision, and in an instant was borne by a huge toppling wave away over the frail vessel which contained his ill-fated parents and relations—he still held on, and in another moment found himself clear of the yacht, and hanging by his hands at the bow of the destroying ship. His cries were loud—they were heard—in an instant all hands ran forward to lend him assistance; he still kept hold of the rope which fortunately for him was adrift, and he was hauled into the ship more dead than alive.”

“This,” said George, “is his own narrative, attested by our Minister.”

“When he recovered he found himself in bed in the captain’s cabin, scarcely conscious where he was or of the heavy loss he had sustained; he describes the grief and

anxiety of the captain to have been excessive, and his exertions to discover any part of the wreck unremitting. It blew excessively hard, and the darkness of the night was such that they could form no accurate estimate of the distance which they had run from the spot where the disaster occurred before they could shorten sail, and then it was a matter of utter hopelessness to endeavour to retrace their course—they lay to and tried to keep their ground, but all their exertions were unavailing, and they never saw a vestige of the unfortunate yacht—nor of the piece of wreck upon which the only other two seamen were saved.”

“But,” said Lady Frances, who was not yet aware of half the difficulties and embarrassments in which this event would involve both herself and her son,—“What has caused so long a delay in the receipt of this intelligence.”

“The circumstances, my lady,” said the lawyer, “are these : the vessel which caused the dreadful collision was a French ship, bound from Marseilles to Odessa, and it was impossible for her to touch at any intervening port for several cogent reasons, set forth in the attestation of these facts by the captain ; it was necessary, therefore, for Lord Weybridge to proceed to the place of her destination ; his lordship’s health was extremely delicate, and the circumstance of the loss of his family told upon his constitution in the protracted voyage, and he remained for several weeks at Odessa, too ill to write or forward any intelligence respecting his preservation. He continued under medical care in an English mercantile house there, by the owner of which he was supplied with every necessary and comfort, and about ten weeks since left Odessa in better health than could be expected, whence, as Captain Sheringham says, he is travelling *via* Paris to London, and whither, by my advice, Mr Crabshaw is gone to meet him.”

“What George’s chaplain—”

“—My dear mother,” said George, “I have no chaplain—no right to one—and I think, as far as my marriage goes—no need of one at present.

“I am amazed,” said her ladyship.

“I told you to prepare yourself for a blow ;” said George, “and one which will fall more heavily than you may yet anticipate. I am personally responsible to the present lord for all the rents I have received during my delusion, and indebted to him in all the sums I have expended.”

“But what are we to do ?” said Lady Frances. “How shall we break it to our friends ?”

“Let it take its own course for a few days,” said George, “and our friends will scarcely be sufficiently numerous to make it any great matter of difficulty to inform them.”

“But what a blow upon the dear Duchess !” said her

ladyship, who at the moment was thinking of her own embarrassments and involvements.

"Yes," said George, "her Grace will lose a baron for her son-in-law, unless, with a devotion and delicacy which interest and a predetermination sometimes overcome, she contrives so that her daughter shall transfer her affections to my rescued cousin, and marry the title although she change the man."

"What an idea!" said her ladyship. "But now really Mr Snell, what is to happen?"

"Nothing that shall personally inconvenience your ladyship," said Mr Snell, "of that I shall take care—but the absolutely necessary part of the affair is the surrender of the whole of the estates and property, accounting, as the Captain says, to the real possessor for the amount received and disbursed."

"And Katharine's diamonds, George?" said Lady Frances.

"Why," said George, "as they are not mine to give, they cannot be her's to keep."

"How distressing," said her ladyship, "because of one thing I am sure, that neither Katharine nor her mother will hear of any alteration in the arrangements; a cottage with the man she loves is what that dear amiable girl would prefer to a palace without him."

"That sounds very romantic," said Sheringham, "and must be according to your principles, rather foolish; I remember suggesting something of that sort myself, only reversing the case, and your ladyship was pleased to be exceedingly angry."

"When must we quit this, Sir?" said Lady Frances to Mr Snell.

"Only as soon as convenient," replied the lawyer.

"Thank God!" said George, "this ends all squabbles about my importance, and the value of an alliance; and above all am I right glad that I have still under my foot the quarter deck of his Majesty's ship Destructive—I told you it would go hard, but I should sail in her yet, and now my prophetic anticipations are realized."

"There will be no occasion for any such proceeding," said Lady Frances.

"Well, I am glad to see you bear this reverse with so much placidity," said George.

The truth is, that the stillness of Lady Frances was anything rather than placidity—she was overwhelmed—paralyzed—as the sea in a violent storm becomes smooth by the mere force of the wind—a thousand complicated terrors filled her mind more immediately personal to herself, than the mere loss of the dignity of her favourite son—it seemed

as if ruin had fallen upon them—she was conscious that the demand upon George was more than the whole of her own fortune would defray—that all the bills at Dale Cottage remained unsettled—and that even if she weathered the storm by which they were overtaken, she should be compelled to return to Binford, in reduced means, an object, perhaps, of compassion to the Lovells and the rest of the neighbourhood.

“Under whose care will the present lord be placed till he comes of age?” said her ladyship.

“That will depend upon himself,” said Snell, “he is of competent age to make his choice; but I suspect he will be guided in his election entirely by Mr Crabshaw, his tutor, to whom he was always much attached, and who has gone to meet him at Paris at his special request.”

“Mr Crabshaw, I once saw in Brook Street, George?” said her ladyship.

“Yes, you did;” said her son; “and I recollect your most pointedly affronting him because he ventured to differ in opinion with you about some exhibition, the merits of which you were discussing—that will not facilitate our arrangements at present—a serious injury a man perhaps forgives upon principle or because it has been somehow atoned for—a personal affront—the slightest scratch upon the *amour propre* of such a thin-skinned gentleman as Mr Crabshaw, never heals.”

“And his influence,” said her ladyship, “you think is considerable?”

“I do, my lady,” said Mr Snell; “and it seems natural it should be so—he has been his lordship’s constant companion during his growing up—highly esteemed, and generally consulted by his father, who had the highest opinion of him, and confided to him most of his views and intentions, especially upon the subject of his sons. It is natural, that spared as Mr Crabshaw has been from the general calamity, he should feel a melancholy pleasure in his society, and a sort of filial gratification in attending to the counsel of one selected by his late father to form his mind and regulate his pursuits.”

“Have you any idea,” said Lady Frances, who seemed to entertain a hope that the young lord would select her son as his guardian, “as to the probable object of the young man’s choice?”

“I have reason to think,” said Mr Snell, “that he will put himself under the care of the Chancellor—and I am led to believe this, from some conversation which I had with Mr Crabshaw before his departure for Paris.”

“What, sir,” said her ladyship, “have *you* seen the tutor?”

"It was from Mr Crabshaw I first was apprized of all the circumstances of his lordship's existence," said the lawyer. "He wrote to the bankers, and to us—he also wrote to his friend and tutor, and at much greater length than to any body else—indeed we were referred to Mr Crabshaw for all the more minute particulars of the affair."

Lady Frances did not at all admire the rigid impartiality of the solicitor, who had felt it his duty to exert himself most actively in executing the wishes of the young lord, forgetting that the natural allegiance of the firm was due to that branch of the family, and that he had only taken up the affairs of her son, as being connected with it.

"Rely upon it, my lady," said Mr Snell, "that every regard will be paid to your ladyship's comfort and convenience. I had what I knew to be a most disagreeable duty to perform, and certainly if I had been aware of the gaieties of last night, I should not have intruded during their existence."

"Oh! I am sure," said Lady Frances, "that you—of course you are not to blame—only, what puzzles me is—what is best to be done?"

"Calm your mind, my dear mother," said George, "and compose your features—impart our downfall to the Duchess and her daughter—prepare to lay aside a state and ceremony which it cost me a bitter sacrifice to maintain, and thank God you have a son, not worse off than he was, before the fatal accident which lifted him up for a moment, but who is able and willing to fight his way through the world with just as much philosophy as if he had never been a peer."

"All that's very true," said Lady Frances; "but —"

"I know," said George; "but we must bear up against the ills which assail us. The unlucky part of the affair, I confess to be the diamonds, to which I have no right—but you must manage that—and, as I can pretty well guess what the course of the Duchess will be, it is only a matter of delicacy to return the *cadeaux de nocces*, and I shall immediately take the opportunity of handing them over to my trusty friend, Mr Snell. I presume," continued George, addressing himself to the solicitor, "that the arrangements necessary to be entered into for the restitution of property expended, will not be of a nature to hinder my proceeding forthwith to Portsmouth to commission the ship to which I was, only three days since, so luckily appointed."

"Certainly not," said Snell; "I will take care of all that, and I am sure you will find every disposition to make the affair as little uncomfortable as possible to you; indeed, the circumstances are such, that it would be cruel to press

hard upon you for a reimbursement of what you had every right to imagine your own."

"I am bewildered," said Lady Frances—"I see the necessity of taking some decided step—but I feel incapable of action."

"In the first place, my dear mother," said George, "I repeat, go and impart our sad secret to the Duchess—that I maintain to be the first thing to be done—as for myself, I suppose my excellent tormentor, MacGopus, will have no objection now to be my companion at sea, and —"

"— Still the sea, George," said Lady Frances.

"Oh, assuredly—and if we are lucky enough to have a war, I will pay off my liabilities with prize money."

"Well, I see my influence is unavailing—but," said Lady Frances, "recollect the dear Lady Katharine."

"Aye, aye," replied George, "you perform your part in the affair—relate the history of our unlooked-for tumble, and all that will be left for me to do, will neither be difficult nor important."

"I go," said her ladyship, "because I agree with you in the necessity of making the communication—that it will make any serious alteration in your prospects there, if I know any thing of Katharine or her mother, I think I may justly doubt."

"*Nous verrons*, as I say," replied George.

"You are not going to day, sir," said her ladyship, graciously, to Mr Snell.

"Captain Sheringham is good enough to wish me to stay till to-morrow," replied the lawyer, "and I shall avail myself of the pleasure of remaining."

"We shall meet then at dinner —" saying which, her ladyship proceeded to the room appropriated for Lady Katharine's studio, where the nearly finished portrait of Lord Weybridge stood waiting on its easel for a last sitting—the expectant artist, *en costume*, wondering at George's delay, and watching the fast retiring daylight, with an anxiety justly proportioned to the scolding, the Duchess had given her for her indifference the night before.

George and Snell together hunted out the Doctor, and to him the story was confided. He received it in a manner different from that which he was usually wont to assume in listening to narratives. He was greatly affected, much indeed, to George's surprise—he neither *queried* their statements nor contradicted their assertions; and all he said when the story was concluded, and the fact established, was—"Then the Destructive for ever."

"And you on board of her, MacGopus," said George.

"We'll see, sir," said MacGopus—"we'll see—umph—this is bad—It isn't that in *my* mind the oldest lord in the

average is one bit better than a post-captain in his Majesty's navy—but it's hard to be hoisted up, and thrown from a height—the fall hurts—and it will hurt Lady Frances—it is a ugly business, and yet one dare not murmur at the dispensations of Providence, which have spared this young man from the general wreck of his family."

George saw, or at least fancied he saw, that MacGopus was greatly annoyed; indeed, almost overcome; and quitted the room to join his mother, in order to see the effect which had been produced upon the Duchess and her daughter.

"These reimbursements will worry him," said MacGopus to Snell.

"I shall manage so as to inconvenience him as little as possible," said the lawyer—"and it may be that Lord Weybridge will feel no disposition to press the matter; but unfortunately, Crabshaw, who has great influence over him, has taken deadly offence at some observation upon the vulgarity of his manners or coarseness of remarks which Lady Frances happened to make one day in London, indeed the only day he saw her, and it has left an indelible mark on his mind. I hope and trust that such a feeling will not be permitted to operate seriously to Captain Sheringham's disadvantage, for a better heart or kinder disposition I never met with."

"What will be the probable amount of the claims against him?" said MacGopus.

"According to my calculation," said Snell, "including purchases of plate and furniture—which, however, may in all probability be taken over by the new lord—somewhere about seventeen or eighteen thousand pounds."

"Ah!" said MacGopus, with a sigh—"more you see than we will succeed to, even upon the death of his mother."

"Who," said the lawyer, "I am sorry to hear—and I have heard it, not professionally, is involved to a much greater extent than either her son imagines, or, as I think, she herself believes."

"It is a bad business," said the Doctor—"and yet one as I have just said at which one ought not, in truth and justice, to repine."

While this conversation was passing in the library, a scene was in progress in the studio. When George arrived, the disclosure had been made, the merits of the case dismissed—the Duchess was evidently much flurried—the affair between the Captain, in the character of Lord Weybridge, and her daughter, had gone to such extremities, and the surprise was so great—and the affair so sudden.

Katharine was sincerely affected—because she really loved George—loved is perhaps rather too strong a term—but she was convinced, like or not like, love or not love,

that the match was at an end. She was brought to Severnstoke to marry Lord Weybridge, its master—and she was perfectly convinced, by the experience she had of her mother's conduct towards George on other days, that now he was not Lord Weybridge, and that Severnstoke did not belong to him, she was not destined to be his wife—and it was quite absurd—if any thing *could* be laughable at a period of such general sorrow—to see her progressively disincumber herself of all the paraphernalia in which she was habited for the purpose of painting his picture: she disrobed gradually, and dismantled all the apparatus regularly, as the history of their discomfiture proceeded, sentence by sentence.

First, shortly after the opening of the sad story, she laid down the pencils she had been grasping, still retaining the palette stuck on the thumb of her left hand—at another stage of the narrative the palette was abandoned—at a further stage her ladyship untied and took off the curiously contrived apron and sleeves, which were destined to guard her skin and drapery from the effects of the paint—until at last, when the catastrophe was announced, she silently rose from her seat, and taking the picture of George off the easel, turned it, like Barbara Allan's sweetheart, with its "face unto the wall," and then shutting up the easel itself, deposited it in the corner where it was accustomed to stand when unemployed.

"Well," said the Duchess to George, as he entered the room—affecting spirits if she had them not—"this is a sad history!"

"Rather a glad one," said the captain—"your Grace must recollect that a life has been saved which we believed to have been lost —"

"But such a blight to all your prospects!" said the Duchess.

"My prospects are much what they were four months ago," said George—"I have a profession which has made many a man greater than I have yet been. I have health and good will to work my way, and I have plenty of kind friends to cheer me in my task of duty."

"When do you go to your ship?" said the Duchess —

"— Exactly at the time I proposed the day before yesterday," was his reply.

— Katharine here somewhat hastily quitted the room—she saw what would infallibly happen —

"And disregard all that dear Katharine said?" asked Lady Frances —

"Why," said the Duchess, "as to my poor child, it is certainly a dreadful blow upon her—you see she was unable to remain here any longer —"

"There has no blow fallen," said George—"which can

harm her; it is true I have not the title of Weybridge, but I am, **barring** that small distinction and its concomitant wealth, which never could have weighed with a young heart like Katharine's, to all intents and purposes, the same person I was yesterday—the same blood runs in my veins—the same feelings animate my heart ——”

“To be sure,” said the Duchess—“yes—that is all very true—but—one's arrangements—the difference—that is I don't know—Katharine has told me, long before this event, that she feared you did not feel that affection for her which—in short, I doubt—if ——”

“Duchess,” said Sheringham, looking at her with an expression which must have cut her to the heart—“your Grace's daughters have all succeeded admirably in their matrimonial connexions—it is quite right that Lady Katharine should keep pace with her sisters—upon occasions like this, the less said the better. Whatever her inclinations may be, remember *your* Grace's mind is changed—*mine* is not—I leave this to-morrow, for Portsmouth, to assume the command of my ship.”

“My dear George,” said Lady Frances, “but consider Lady Katharine's feelings, the suddenness ——”

“My dear Lady Frances,” said the Duchess, “I am not sure that the very suddenness of such events as these—so unlooked for—so unexpected, does not diminish the pain and distress they would otherwise occasion. We shall only worry and agitate you by remaining here, and I think it would perhaps be wisest if we were to start, so as to avoid a formal separation.”

“Separation,” said Lady Frances—“why my dear Duchess, do you really mean that this event is to terminate the proposed connexion between us?”

“I think it would be but prudent it should,” said the Duchess, “Katharine's fortune, you know, is small, and yours, my dear George ——”

——“Is all to be made, Madam,” said Sheringham, bowing with an affected respect.

“I don't think I should be justified in permitting a daughter of mine to marry under such circumstances.”

“But,” said Lady Frances, “do you really think that Katharine will quietly admit the abandonment of a man to whom she is engaged?”

“I think she will,” said the Duchess, “and I am more inclined to think she will, because in my opinion, she ought to do so. In engagements of this sort, there are certain conditions—certain terms.—Circumstances unluckily prevent your son's fulfilling those conditions, and I consider myself, and consequently my daughter, entirely exonerated from any claim.”

“I really am surprised,” said Lady Frances, “at the view your Grace takes of the affair—I ——”

"No," said the Duchess, "I am candid and open in my observations, and I will honestly confess that I am not sorry for what has happened, except for your sake. Katharine, I assure you, has complained to me, with tears in her eyes, of coldness on George's part, which so little accorded with her enthusiasm and feelings, that she could not but believe his intended marriage to have been more the consequence of a conviction that he was actually under an engagement, than the result of that sort of affection, which she considers absolutely and essentially necessary to happiness."

"How could she imagine such a thing?" said Lady Frances.

"Easily enough, my dear friend," said her Grace, "I saw it too, and," added her Grace, addressing herself to George, "my apprehensions were not a little strengthened by your extraordinary resolution about going to sea so soon after your marriage—that was a blow which wounded her pride, and offended her delicacy."

"Let us end this discussion," said George, "it is most painful—the only consolatory part of the affair is derivable from your Grace's last observation. If the fall of my fortunes has prevented your Grace's daughter from uniting herself to a man whom she did not think attached to her, it has its advantages. It is not for me, in my present position, to vindicate myself from the suppositions of others. I know myself—I know what I consider my duty—I am prepared to do it. I rejoice that I am spared, by events over which I have had no control, from making so amiable a being as your Grace's daughter, unhappy; and that I am encouraged to withdraw from a connexion in which, since candour appears to be the order of the day, I admit I did as little anticipate perfect happiness as Lady Katharine herself appears to have done."

With these words, George, who was seriously angry at the paltry littleness of the great lady, quitted the room, apparently with the intention of not returning to it again, at least for some time.

"Captain Sheringham," said the Duchess, "is exceedingly rude;—the habits of his profession, and the manners of the gun-room must be his best excuse. I can of course no longer render myself liable to similar remarks, or a repetition of such behaviour, and therefore, painful as it is, I must beg leave to order my carriage, and quit the house of an old friend from which I must certainly say I never expected to depart under similar circumstances."

"My dear Duchess," said Lady Frances, who still clung to the hope of the connexion.

"— I must be positive," said her Grace, "I am quite sure of one thing, and that is, that a formal parting or separation between us would be most painful and distressing.—In-

deed, after your son's observations with regard to Katharine —"

—"They were provoked by your previous remarks," said Lady Frances.

"No matter," continued the Duchess—"I must act according to my feelings of what is due to myself and my family—you are going out—your carriage is at the door—never mind us—we will take our departure when you are absent, and when we meet again, I trust we shall meet as friends."

"Since you are determined to go, Duchess, I must insist on remaining to see you off," said Lady Frances.

"All I bargain for, is, that Katharine may be spared any interview with your son," said the angry mother—"she would not survive it."

"I believe," said Lady Frances, who finding sweet words of no avail, began in turn to fire up, "neither your Grace nor Lady Katharine need apprehend any intrusion on his part."

The Duchess seeing that Lady Frances was getting into a rage, and preparing to open a battery upon her, adroitly quitted the serious and elevated tone, and dropped into the familiar, and made preparations for leaving the room—a movement which Lady Frances endeavoured to prevent. Her Grace however was resolved, and passed out of the studio in a heat of rage, such as her friend had never seen excited before.

Her ladyship proceeded in search of her son, to communicate to him, what to his ears was the most welcome intelligence possible; namely, that the Duchess was in a passion, and had resolved to part forthwith in dudgeon. In the mean time, her Grace went to her daughter's room, where she found her, much to her amazement, in tears, while in the ante-room stood one of the assistants of Madam Maradan Carsan, who had arrived early in the morning, with all the bridal finery, which was spread out upon the tables, and sofas, and chairs, ready to be selected and approved of.

Her Grace was as good as her word—so was George—he mounted his horse, and rode off to the next adjacent, in order to get out of her way; and she having reconnoitred and watched his movements, took all the advantage of his absence which he meant to afford her, and about half-past five, having shaken hands with Lady Frances, who would not leave her, threw herself into her travelling carriage, in which Lady Katharine had already been placed, having resolved neither to see nor speak to any body connected with Severnstoke previous to her departure.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The woes of life are lessened by a friend.
In all the cares of life, we by a friend
Assistance find—who'd be without a friend?"

WANDSFORD.

"I TOLD you so, my dear mother," said George, as the now reduced circle began to assemble for dinner—the last, or nearly the last they were destined to eat in Severnstoke House. "I told you what the character of her Grace's affection for us was!"

"But my dear George," said Lady Frances, "you offended her—you spoke in a manner, which it was next to impossible she should endure."

"Not a bit of it," replied the Captain; "if I had been to-day what I was to all appearance yesterday, she would have called my decision spirit, and my conversation wit—no—I saw she was determined to make a quarrel of it, and I resolved to give her a favourable opportunity. I know her well—as for Lady Katharine, my opinion of her is very different; her failing is only that of falling into her mother's views, and being very obedient when her duty does not run counter to her inclination."

"Poor Katharine," said her ladyship, "I assure you was deeply affected, and, I believe, would have given the world to see you and bid you farewell. She cried bitterly when she came to me to return the diamonds and other cadeaux with which you had presented her."

"Whether her tears were shed for the loss of the trinkets," said George, "or of your ladyship's hopeful son, does not appear so certain."

"Don't be ungrateful, George," said his mother; "I admit I have been disappointed in the Duchess, but I still maintain my original opinion of her daughter."

The appearance in the drawing-room of Mr Snell, who had been occupied during the whole of the day with the bailiff and land-steward, and under whose directions an inventory of the furniture of the house was now making, distinguishing the new from the old, and who had, in consequence of his honest and zealous exertions on the part of his young and noble client, become most particularly odious to Lady Frances, put an end to the conversation, or rather changed it to more general topics.

"To-morrow," said Lady Frances, "I go hence—I suppose for ever. I shall now, however, be able to fulfil my original intentions, of passing my Christmas at my brother's at Grimsbury; so that I have something left to fall back upon."

"And I," said George, "and my angularly minded compan-

ion, the faithful MacGopus, shall proceed to London, where I shall merely sleep, and then run down to Portsmouth where my ship is ; I shall hoist my pendant and make all speed in fitting out and getting a good crew ; and then, down foresail, and be off in a fortnight or three weeks at the latest."

"How delightful is the elasticity of mind you possess," said Lady Frances, who now as strenuously advocated his going to sea as she had formerly opposed it ; "devotion to a profession is every thing—no success can be looked for without it."

"I must write to Lovell before I start," said George.

"To Mr Lovell," said his mother.

"Yes," said George, "about our executorship accounts, and to inquire after the poor widow—perhaps youth and a fine constitution may bring her through ; but if they do, I shall be most agreeably surprised. Lovell does not yet know of my sudden tumble in society."

"I dare say it will create a world of sympathy in their little community," said her ladyship.

The announcement of dinner stopped Lady Frances in the middle of what, in all probability, would have turned into a satirical history of the party, delivered to Mr Snell—but intended for her son. Snell's modesty held him back from offering his arm to Lady Frances, who more pleased with his respect than she would have been gratified by his civility, walked mincingly towards the dinner room alone, followed by the two gentlemen.

When they came to the table, covers were only laid for three.

"Where is Dr MacGopus's cover," said George.

"Dr MacGopus is gone, sir," said the butler.

"Gone !" exclaimed George ; "gone where ?"

"To London I believe," said the man, "he desired to have one of the boys from the stable to carry his bag and portmantau to the lodge, and the boy says, he got into the London coach that passes at five o'clock."

"What is the meaning of all this," said lady Frances.

"Oh, nothing," said George, "nothing ; he had some particular business to-morrow in town. I suppose he did not like taking leave."

This was not true ; but George was stricken to the heart by the unexpected defection of him upon whose constancy of friendship under all circumstances he had implicitly relied ; it was a subject he could not discuss before the servants ; he therefore made an excuse for the Doctor's absence, but the struggle to conceal his feelings rendered him unconscious of what he was doing, and induced Lady Frances, who like another Lady Macbeth, had no desire that the abstraction of George should be evident to the spectators, to beg Mr Snell to help the soup.

"How very odd," said George, "umph."

"Why, my love," said her ladyship, "you always knew he

was odd ; not that I see any great oddity in not taking leave of persons to whom one is attached—what can be more horrid !”

“ But he might have staid till morning,” said George, “ he would then have gone with me —”

And George felt his going deeply ; he had always considered the Doctor as of the pine-apple tribe, rough without, but rich within, and the loss of his rank, title, place, and pre-eminence, scarcely affected him so much as the desertion of one whom he believed devoted to his interests under any circumstances.

The evening passed heavily enough, Snell was not an extremely vivacious companion, and it was difficult to start any very interesting topic ; his eyes wandered about the apartments, as Lady Frances thought, with somewhat of an appraiser-like anxiety to ascertain the value of the articles which had been brought into Severnstoke by the temporary lord's upholsterers ; and the conversation could scarcely be kept clear of references to matters of business which it was necessary to transact. Then came the surrender of the diamonds that erst had lain on the toilette of my Lady Katharine—and Lady Frances, as she parted with them for ever, gazed at them, and shook them, and made them twinkle in the light ; and one could have seen, in the expression of her ladyship's countenance, a mingled grief and sorrow—As Shakspeare says,

“ Dumb jewels in their silent kind,
More than quick words do move a woman's mind.”

and certainly, the agitation of her ladyship upon restoring—if that might be called restoring, which was rendering up what never belonged to her—the casket—was not to be concealed.

Truth to be told, there never was a much more melancholy night passed at Severnstoke. George retired to his own room, and occupied an hour or two in tearing up and burning papers and letters, which had accumulated in the drawers, of what, eight and forty hours before he had fancied *his* library table—for papers will accumulate—save and except bank notes, which seem to have an inherent Malthusianism in their very nature.

Time wore on, and the carriages were ordered at different hours in the morning—George having been so unexpectedly deprived of the society of his friend the Doctor, abandoned his plan of going to London, and proposed proceeding immediately to Portsmouth, *via*, Bath and Southampton : and Mr Snell, who intended remaining a few hours after the departure of George and his mother, for the purpose of arraigning with the servants of the household, and giving the house into the charge of the local upholsterers, who had made out the inventory, was to quit Severnstoke at about five or six in the afternoon, intending to reach Chipping Norton, to sleep at the inn there, in which there are more comfort and more pretty faces, than might be reasonably expected, and treatment which here-

tics have no right to anticipate. There Snell determined to sleep—he liked the snugger of the place, and the curtained door of the bed-room so tickled his fancy, that upon his return to London, he induced Mrs S. to have a similar one fitted to their own chamber in Keppel-street, Bloomsbury.

Lady Frances was amongst the earliest up and ready for the start—her carriage—her servants—all she had ever had, were prepared for her ladyship's reception; and she took special care before her departure to impress upon the mind of the said Snell, that it was a matter of perfect indifference to *her*, whether George had the barony or had it not;—that she was on her way to her brother, the Marquis of Pevensey, at Grimsbury, and that she hoped to live to see her darling son cut out a peerage for himself with his own "good sword." Indeed, her ladyship rallied prodigiously, and when she kissed George's cheek, no tear was visible in her eye, although it was observed, that immediately after she had seated herself in the carriage she pulled down the blinds, whether to conceal her natural grief, or disappoint the gazers of the town through which she was to pass, history has not determined.

George had to write to Lovell, and the letter was an arduous and a painful task; he had to express how completely all his grandeur had vanished,—how shorn he was of his dignities, and how deserted by his parasites and followers;—he had to admit, that although he had condescended to bow to the shrine of rank and connexion, he had been spurned and rejected; and that the example set by Emma Lovell upon a high principle, had been followed by Lady Katharine upon an extremely low one. He had to announce his departure for sea—his separation in all probability final, from the Lovells—his consequent disregard for what Mrs Harbottle had bid him consider as her dying request, and to confess his own unworthiness in the course he had pursued, and proclaim the retributive justice by which his vacillating conduct had been rewarded. All this he had to do, convinced now, more than ever, that Emma would refuse any thing like an advance on his part, even if he could so far humiliate himself as to appear before her, the beaten pretender to exalted rank, and the discarded suitor of illustrious beauty.

No, he was destined to be unhappy—his mother's pride had decided his fate, and he was bound to endure the consequences—and the more he reflected upon the way in which, in point of fact, he had ventured to trifle with Miss Lovell's feelings, the more he felt convinced of the impossibility of overcoming her resolutions; because, as has been argued over and over again in the course of this little narrative, the very fact of his doubting her excellence and propriety, and even virtue—upon which doubts, all his follies and all his excuses were grounded—was of itself so gross an insult, that she never would or could forgive it.

All he did in his letter to Lovell, was to explain succinctly

what had happened to deprive him of the honours which he had so briefly enjoyed, and to assure Mr Lovell *generally*, that every request of his should be attended to. He gave a programme of his future proceedings, and begged to receive a letter while he was at Portsmouth.

George still lingered about Severnstoke. He could scarcely believe that no note had been left by MacGopus—he wandered from room to room—not that he felt an unmanly or needless grief at quitting them as their owner—but because many eventful hours had passed within them; and there was something melancholy in seeing the men jotting down the different articles of furniture, and measuring, and spanning, and stretching, and shaking, and putting every thing in order. However, all this feverish sensation was doomed to have an end; and about two o'clock he quitted his lost paradise, having delivered it over to Snell, who took re-possession of it and all its appurtenances, in the name of its rightful owner.

The Captain—for so we must now call him—proceeded direct for Bath, which he expected to reach about ten o'clock. There he intended to sleep; and thence, proceeding the next morning, he would reach Portsmouth in time for a late dinner. The morning after that, accoutred with his newly anchored epaulettes, he would commission his ship, and there establish himself till she was ready for sea—making the George his head-quarters, devoting himself, heart and soul, to the work of fitting out.

All this was executed according to the design—and by half-past eight o'clock on the second evening from his departure, the travelling chariot of Captain Sheringham—the coronets painted out by a coachmaker in the town near Severnstoke—drove up to the door of the George, and the gallant Captain of H. M. S. Destructive was ushered into the parlour on the left-hand of the hall, which, although small and on the ground floor, possessed the striking recommendation of a blazing fire—and wherein, without further ceremony, he resolved to ensconce himself, until he could “rig himself” out in proper form to visit the Admiral in the morning, whose immediate proximity rendered his present quarters particularly convenient.

His mother said he had an elastic mind, and so he had—for upon taking up the London newspaper of the day, in order to amuse himself while his dinner was getting ready, he found the whole detail of his discomfiture as to the peerage, and the subsequent sudden breaking off of the Malvern match, printed and published at full length for the edification of the town and country—still his griefs were of a deeper cast—his cares of a more complicated character—and the very fact that other thoughts occupied him, and other objects interested him, was, perhaps, the greatest blessing that could have befallen him.

His deeper sorrows were however suspended, in the necessity of getting scarlet facings put to his uniform coat—having

aged Kings, the navy had changed colour since he had
ved. The buttons, too, which before had been in one shape,
re now to be placed in another; and the skirts were to be
erently cut; and there was to be no gold lace where there
d been gold lace formerly; and gold lace now where gold
e had never yet been; and his sword belt was to be half an
h wider; and the seam of his pantaloons an inch and a
arter narrower: and he was not to wear a sword such as he
d, but one with another sort of hilt; and he was to "bend"
differently shaped hat; and a bullion-loop instead of a laced
e—and so on, as the tailor told him, producing the cor-
borative regulations stitched into a sort of pattern book—all
ese details, and others of a similarly important nature, forced
e gallant Captain from the contemplation of his own per-
onal hardships.

As he had renounced all patronage in the appointment of
ficers to the Destructive, he was saved much trouble in appli-
tions, and many painful necessities of refusal. He longed to
on board the Hooker; and really so busied himself in making
t lists and memoranda of what he had to do "for the good
the service," that he scarcely recollected what he had so
cently lost, or whence he had so suddenly fallen.

While the Captain is making his preparations, it may be ne-
ssary to state, that Mr Crabshaw, who was rather more of a
ndy than a tutor need be, and who, as has been already
ated, had taken the most violent offence at some observations

Lady Frances, which he thought applied more personally
himself than there was any necessity for, had arrived in
iris only eight hours before the young Lord. His lordship,
ho was really attached to Crabshaw, naturally took his im-
pressions from that gentleman's account of his relatives; and
at report coming after the constantly avowed dislike of his
te father and mother for Lady Frances, induced the young no-
eman at once to throw himself into the hands of his *Stulzified*
mentor, and agree to whatever course he thought fit to propose.

Crabshaw, who had consulted the lawyers previously to his
parture, merely repeated what Messrs Wickins, Snell, and
bthorpe suggested—that the safest and best way would be—
ore especially considering that the actual possession of the
nts, estates, and property, by the supposed Lord Weybridge,
ould involve important matters of account—for Crabshaw, in
e character of *prochain amy* to the young nobleman, to file
bill in Chancery, so as to make his Lordship a ward of court:
-a measure which would at once put him out of any power or
fluence which George or his mother might be supposed to be
sirsous of exercising over him, and render the proceedings
nnected with pecuniary matters less irksome than if the case
ere not taken entirely under the Chancellor's jurisdiction.

Lord Weybridge, who had been received with the greatest
ndness by our Minister in Paris, and, indeed, remained at his

hotel during his stay in that city, thus took the most prudent step which could be suggested ; and of course rendered poor George liable, without hope of mitigation, or any great delay, for all the expenditure in which he had indulged, and all the rents and proceeds which he had received, in order to defray the charges of maintaining the honour and character of a title which he vainly fancied his own.

But this was not the only rub he met with. The news of his degradation from the peerage had reached the Admiral before his arrival at Portsmouth ; and he found a letter from the first lord, stating that, under the circumstances, he thought he could not expect the ship for which he had applied—that the promotion had been made and the commission transmitted, under an idea that he actually was the person whom he had represented himself to be ; and that, although the Admiralty were not disposed to wound his feelings by making any alteration in their decision, as far as his post-rank went—the ship was wholly out of the question.

Hereupon a correspondence ensued—in which George stated that he was authorized to commission the *Destructive* as a post-captain, and not as a peer ; and that it was a case which would admit of *no* equivocation. He was replied to. The answer was bungling—it had all the demerit of being shabby, without the redeeming quality of cleverness—and to loggerheads they went ;—and the first lord at last finding it impossible to sneak out, and not at that period, being entirely callous to shame, George was permitted to have his ship. But her destination was changed, and he was ordered to take out a Governor, his lady, two daughters, one son, (his aid-de-camp) ; another son, (his secretary) ; three horses, two cows, four housemaids, a butler, and two footmen, together with one hundred and thirty-eight packages of sorts, three pointers, and a Newfoundland dog : for all of which persons and things, Captain Sheringham was ordered to make suitable accommodation.

Down went the bulk-heads—up went the green baize partitions—here was the governor's sleeping-cabin—his lady's sitting-cabin—and opposite the young ladies' berth, which was death to them—holes were cut in the deck for stanchions for the aid-de-camp's cot, and the secretary's cot—a screened-off place was made up for the maids, and there were coops for the dogs, and a pen for the cows, and the horses were slung down into stalls, and four guns were run in, to make room for the stud—so that, what with the cattle, cats, canary birds, men, maids, and materiel, H. M. S. *Destructive* looked more like Noah's Ark than any thing that has been since seen floating upon the face of the waters, except my Lord Mayor's barge on the river Thames when his Lordship is graciously pleased to go swan-hopping.

All this, George was forced to endure, and luckily too, for there were bustle and excitement and variety in all the pro-

eedings connected with his departure, which diverted his thoughts from subjects in fact much nearer his heart.

The day of departure was at hand. His Excellency and family arrived at the *George*, and Sheringham proceeded to introduce himself; the aid-de-camp and the secretary proceeded on board, examined and reported most enthusiastically of the admirable accommodations, and endeavoured to cheer up the young ladies into something like composure at abandoning their native country, Almacks, and all the rest of it, and nothing was wanting but a slight shift of wind from the south-west to separate them from all their dear friends and acquaintances in happy England.

On the morning following the arrival of the honourable exiles, George received two letters. One from Lovell, couched in the most friendly terms, entreating George to bear up against the sports, or rather frowns of fortune, assuring him of the deep interest he took in his welfare, and of the anxiety with which he should watch his progress. The old gentleman announced a change for the better in the health of their dear suffering friend; and to Sheringham's delight and surprise concluded his welcome epistle by conveying him Emma's desire to be particularly remembered to him, as well as her best wishes for his happiness and prosperity.

It seemed to him—but it was almost impossible—as if she had begun to relent in her resolution to abandon him for ever; and if there were any alloy to his pleasure in receiving her good wishes, it arose from the apprehension that he was running away from a chance of happiness, and that he might have obtained her forgiveness and her hand if he had remained at home—that however was now past—it was all too late to think of what might have been. The first lieutenant had sent a note on shore to the captain, to say he thought the wind was getting round to the northward, with a view to hurry the embarkation of the noble passengers; and such was George's anxiety to lose no time, that he had scarcely given himself a moment to open the second letter which was addressed to him. It proved, however, to be from MacGopus, from whom he had, to his infinite surprise and disgust, heard not one syllable since his abrupt departure from Severnstoke. It ran as follows:—

“On board the Dolly, Woolwich, January, 1831.

“DEAR GEORGE—You will see by the date of this that I am afloat. I shall pass you at Portsmouth, I hope, in three days from this, if the wind comes fair when we get into the Downs.

“When I left your house I went to London, thinking I had interest to get the appointment of agent to one of the convict ships bound to New South Wales. I was right—but I did more—I found a friend who was just starting in this craft, who wished to remain in England for a month or six weeks longer: we effected an exchange; and here I am, riding at single

anchor, with three hundred and twenty-four of the most desperate ruffians unchanged, under my charge.

"Perhaps you have called me a brute for quitting you so abruptly; and perhaps you will think me a fool for taking to the water again after having dried my feathers. I will explain all that—I could not bear to see you in your unhappiness. I hate leave-taking—so much for my brutality. As for my folly—I had saved up about three thousand pounds during thirty years' service; upon the interest of which, with my half-pay and my small wants, I contrived to live pretty well; but I have work me in yet, and why should I lie idle? Your fall was a sudden and a painful one to me. Your mother had told me how much involved she was, in consequence of fitting up and altering that jigameree cottage at the place where we went to the man's funeral who killed your friend. The attorney told me there would be a claim against you of nearly twenty thousand pounds. I thought to myself that was hard—it was no fault of yours—and I thought you would want money to fit you out and make a fresh start. I sold out my savings, at no bad time either, and you will find enclosed a draft on the Bank of England for two thousand seven hundred pounds—take it. I appoint you my banker till I come home—if ever I do—if not, I shall not want it. I know you are as proud as Lucifer, and that's the reason why I did not send it to you till your anchor was a-peak, Blue Peter up, and fore-topsail loose.

"You cannot catch me, George; and all I hope is, this will catch you in time to be of use. Nobody ever played his cards so badly as you have done—but that's your affair. I don't mean to bore you with sermons—only rely upon it you have had a good escape from that Lady Katharine—or Catamaran, or whatever they call her.

"I expect to get to Sidney somewhere about June, and if I can manage when I have landed my cargo, and am turned adrift, to get home by Calcutta, I may have a chance of seeing you. Good bye, dear Sheringham, and believe me always yours,

ANDREW MACGOWAN.

"Quere? why do they call your frigate the Destructive?"

George was quite overcome by reading this extraordinary letter—a letter at once characteristic of its writer's peculiarities, and illustrative of his higher qualities. The act it announced was princely, and George could not but reflect on the vast injustice he had for so many years done the character of his excellent friend.

To decline the offer made, was impossible; it might jeopardize the money which the worthy man had placed at his disposal; George, therefore, repaid from that fund some advances which he had required from his agent, and paid the remainder into his hands, determined to restore during his period of service that of which he had availed himself; but he felt, how-

re secure of repaying the Doctor his mere money, that he would never sufficiently exhibit his gratitude to a man who had thrown the whole system, and scattered all the savings of life for his sake, without hope of advantage, or even security for his money.

All that was necessary to be done touching this matter Captain Sheringham did forthwith, and when he went on board the frigate he felt a longing hope that he might fall in with the Dolly in the Channel, although the prevalence of the north-westers rendered it improbable, especially as his H. M. Destructive took the earliest advantage of the change, and his her yards nearly square scudded away before a fresh breeze at the rate of nine knots an hour.

Nautical scenes have of late years been so amply and admirably described, that it would be idle to attempt to say one word upon the subject of the proceedings of H. M. S. during her voyage to India. She experienced very little bad weather touched at the Cape—remained there four days—and reached her destination on the seventh day of May, without having suffered any damage or loss of any of the passengers, except a cock canary bird, and his Excellency's Newfoundland dog. Regarding these casualties, the reader may put his mind at rest, and picture the gallant frigate at anchor in Sagor Channel, five fathoms water, about six miles to the northward of the reef-buoy, waiting for a pilot.

As the captain and his ship are destined, according to the regulations of the service, to remain three years on the Indian station, we shall have plenty of time during their absence from England, to cast our eyes upon what is going on at home.

CHAPTER XX.

Oh, name him not, unless it be
In terms I shall not blush to hear;
Oh, name him not, though false to me,
Forget not he was once so dear.
Oh, think of former happy days,
When none could breathe a dearer name;
And if you can no longer praise,
Be silent, and forbear to blame.

He *may* be *all* that you have heard;
If prov'd, 'twere folly to defend:
Yet pause ere you believe one word
Breathed 'gainst the honour of a friend.
How many seem in haste to tell
What friends can never wish to know;

I answer—*once* I knew him well,
And *then*, at least, it was not so.

T. HAYNES BAYLY.

THERE seemed something like a fate hanging over George's proceedings, connected with his attachment to Emma Lovell.—Her just resentment, and her father's natural indignation, were much weakened by the news of his "reduction" from the peerage, and of the difficulties which it was very speedily known, would consequently accumulate upon him; but what might have been the result of this change of sentiment, it was now vain and idle to consider; the die was cast, and the gallant Sheringham was ploughing the deep.

MRS' Harbottle, in her then state of exhaustion, could scarcely sufficiently exert herself to express her anger and vexation at the course he had pursued, after he had by their own act, got disentangled from the connexion with the Duchess and her daughter. Lovell and Emma, whom she had kept in profound ignorance of the nature and character of the communication she had made to him at Severnstoke, could scarcely account for the energy she displayed, or the disappointment she avowed in discussing his later proceedings. But Fanny herself felt seriously grieved, that after all she had openly said, and all she had not very mysteriously hinted, he had not at least made an effort to exculpate himself in the eyes of the being who still fondly loved him, and tried to reinstate himself in her favour, knowing how earnestly his endeavours that way tending, would have been seconded by his most friendly correspondent.

It seemed really as if the disappointment of her hopes and expectations on this point, had more severely affected her, than the severity of her own misfortunes—she felt, that in her own case, the evil was irremediable, the hope was past; but, in this affair the hope remained, and she felt assured that all the ills by which it was environed might have been overcome by a little prudence and consideration on the part of the most interested person, who, as it struck her, having escaped the real evil which had threatened his happiness, chose voluntarily to sacrifice himself to an imaginary misfortune.

So it was.—He was gone—and three long tedious years were to pass before his return to England.

"That return," said Fanny, "I shall never see. Care and kindness, and the strength of my constitution, keep me up against the progress of my disorder, but I feel myself daily sinking from a world in which I have no wish to remain—every prospect of happiness, which I had myself anticipated, has been blighted; and now, the only gratification I looked for, in an endeavour to make the happiness of others, is frustrated."

In the meanwhile time went on, and the festive season at Grimsbury passed away, and Lord Pevensy's party broke up,

and his Lordship repaired to London to fulfil his parliamentary duties. The course which Lady Frances felt compelled to steer was somewhat more dubious and eccentric.—She had received, at Christmas, divers and sundry “lengthy bills” from the upholsterer, paper hangers, and decorators, &c. Accounts most hieroglyphically constructed, from carpenters and joiners—hundreds of feet of plinths, at so much per foot, super. Circular dados grooved and backed. Door linings and soffets rebated on edge, three pannelled and moulded and string-boards, with moulded nosings, mitred to risers. Mahogany hand-rails to stairs, cross-handed ramps and knees, drift 19s. 6d. per foot running. Triglyphs—common modillions—pilasters fluted with capitals, sash panes, &c. &c. &c. Plumbers and plasterers, with all their quirks and wood beads, and enrichments of cornices; and painters and paviours, amounting, as has already been anticipated, to the gross produce of her ladyship’s income for the next three years.

The delay in her ladyship’s return to Binford, after her departure from Grimsbury, caused some little alarm to the expectant handicraftsmen, but they waited patiently until they had received authentic accounts of her ladyship’s having disposed of her lease of the cottage, with all the furniture as it stood, and of her having commenced a series of *soirees*, (as the *elite* of the city call evening parties, and fancy it fine) at the pleasant and salubrious town of Boulogne Sur-Mer, to which fashionable watering-place her ladyship had removed for the benefit of “her health.”

The young Lord Weybridge, who, on his arrival in England, had placed himself entirely in the hands of Mr Crabshaw, took no kind of notice of his right honourable aunt; indeed, the character which her ladyship received at the hands of the tutor, followed up by the general *on dit* of her conduct, with regard to the transactions at Binford, was not of a nature to induce him to seek out a branch of his family, against which, it was most likely he should be compelled to enter into legal hostilities.

As the Spring opened, Mrs Harbottle, instead of rallying appeared to grow weaker and weaker—her mind was constantly worried and agitated, and it was impossible to keep her from a constant recurrence to all that had passed of wretchedness during the last year. Lovell, without whose society, and that of his daughter, she could not have existed, had been peculiarly fortunate in making an arrangement with the incumbent of a parish near Sidmouth, who gladly exchanged duties with him for six months, after his own full period of absence from Binford had expired. And although Emma cast many a thought of affectionate regret upon her little establishments in her own village, she did all she could by ensuring the paternal kindness of her father’s substitute there—while she set her parishioners the example of benevolence and charity, by devoting all the time she could spare from the invalid, to the institutions of a

similar nature, which had been established in the beautiful and romantic village, where they were now located.

Fanny's health still declined.—It is needless to pain the reader's heart, by describing the gradual decay, which one has so often anxiously, yet hopelessly watched, in young and delicate creatures like herself. The progress of her disorder was gentle but sure; and the only point in which her case seemed to differ from others, which have so often wrung the hearts of fond and affectionate friends and relations, appeared to exist in the circumstance of her being fully aware of the seriousness of her condition. Thus prepared for the awful change which she was conscious awaited her, she lingered under the fostering care of her devoted friends, until the middle of August, when she resigned her spirit into the hands of Him who gave it, and her last breath was expended in a prayer for the happiness of her friends, and the forgiveness of her enemies.

The doubts and apprehensions, under which Mr Lovell laboured, with respect to the disposition of her property, were cleared up a few hours before her death. Her object, in inducing them to precede her, in the journey to Minehead, (a circumstance which we noticed at the time,) had not been one of selfish consideration, for her own ease and comfort. She proposed this temporary separation, in order that she might take that opportunity of making a will, under legal advice and instruction, by which she bequeathed, with the exception of one legacy to her aunt, Jarman, the whole of her property, real and personal, to her "beloved, and devoted friend Emma Lovell."

The reader may have naturally anticipated this proceeding, having had the advantage of seeing the letter which she wrote to George while at Severnstoke; but aware as she was of the delicacy of Emma's feelings, and anxious that the world should be convinced of the disinterestedness of her kindness and that of her excellent parent, she never divulged one syllable of her intentions to either of them on the subject.

Thus ended the life of an ill-fated, kind-hearted woman; and pure, and good, and exemplary as she was, her fate should be a caution to those, who, without the least ill intention, give way to feelings which, when once they are suffered to make head against principle and resolution, are most difficult to overcome. She had not sinned—but she had erred; and venial as her crime had been, it had proximately or remotely brought death and sin upon those who were most nearly allied to her, and drew down grief and desolation upon herself and on her house. Blame not—censure not—for ye are weak yourselves. But pity and forgive—and, above all, take warning.

The accession to so vast a fortune as that of which Emma was now mistress, had not the startling effect upon "the Parson's daughter" which might have been expected—in fact, she did not comprehend the extent of her possessions—nor did her mind, at ease with what she had, and seeking only to do good

within her sphere, at once grasp the importance of the change which had occurred to her ; indeed, the loss of her friend, and, for a long time past, her only companion, was to her a blow, the weight of which the accession of all this wealth could but slightly alleviate. Fanny knew her heart to its very core—they had been strangely mixed up in each other's distresses—she could talk of Sheringham to *her*, and she loved to hear her speak of *him*—different her father—but she was gone, and the only consolation she had in her sorrows was torn from her.

The remains of the unhappy widow were interred in the church, of which Lovell was the temporary minister, and immediately after the affecting ceremony, the Rector returned to his laughter, at their residence, and almost immediately after quitted it on their road homewards. It may sound strange, perhaps, but Emma, under the circumstances of her affliction, felt that she should be comparatively easier at Binford, excluded from the world, in the scenes of her former happiness, than any where else—but time—and the exercise of human reason, and of pious resignation, were wanting to alleviate a grief, the like of which Emma had never felt since her poor mother died.

What may be the extent of the power and influence of sympathy, it is not for us poor finite creatures to know, but we may venture to relate facts, and permit speculative philosophers to draw their own conclusions. At the period of Fanny's melancholy death and Emma's consequent distress, George Sheringham lay stretched on a bed of sickness at Calcutta, whence it was found impossible to remove him.

During the voyage his spirits had been dreadfully affected—there had arisen some squabbling differences amongst his noble passengers, and thence between them and himself, and he was worried, and became nervous, and dejected—they fell into extremely hot weather, and he was attacked with fever, from which he never entirely recovered. On reaching Fort William his illness increased, and in so alarming a degree, that the physicians declared nothing likely to save his life but his proceeding, as soon as practicable, to a cooler climate, and their opinion was, that nothing short of England would avail.

He remained, however, until the end of November before there seemed a chance of removing him with safety—he had been invaded from the command of his frigate, and a passage was secured for him in an Indiaman—but George lingered on, in hopes of the promised arrival of MacGopus, in whose society he felt he should be much happier than with strangers, and of whose medical skill he had moreover the highest opinion—but it was not to be—the uncertainties necessarily attendant upon voyages of such a length, and the variability of seasons—of weather—of wind—and indeed, of opportunities, somehow prevailed against their meeting, and early in the month of December, the poor captain was conveyed from his bungalow to the Hoogly, in his palanquin, and thence shipped in his budgerow,

in which he proceeded to embark in the vessel which was to convey him to what every body who saw him felt assured would be his grave.

Those, however, who anticipated this conclusion to his career were fortunately disappointed—he was considerably restored by the voyage, and before they reached St Helena, at which place they touched, he was able to walk without assistance, and when he went ashore there, with the aid only of a friend's arm, he proceeded on foot from the landing-place to the hotel. This walk, however, repaid him for the effort, for what should greet his eyes as he passed across the square from the castle to the inn, but a tall, black-haired man, sitting curled up at a window, airing himself, reading a two-year old number of *Blackwood*—He thought he knew him at a glance—but he could scarcely trust his eyes,—not that it was an unlikely place to find him—he however looked again, and when he saw upon a little table beside him, a round black snuff-box, and a tall brown tumbler of brandy and water, he was convinced—it was the truant Doctor—Alexander MacGopus himself.

“You are a pretty fellow to make an appointment,” said George, as firmly as he was able (having, thanks to the Doctor's near-sightedness, got within reach of him unseen), giving him a huge slap on the shoulder at the same time.

“Dunce!” cried the Doctor—“is it you—my dear George—how are you—eh—where's Destructive—what's the matter—are you ill?”

“You must decide that question,” said Sheringham—“they say I am—or at least was very ill—but, thank God, I am better.”

“I'm not sure of that,” said MacGopus; “show me your tongue—let me feel your pulse. I want to know how you are?”

“And I,” said Sheringham, “want to know why you are here instead of having, according to promise, come to me at Calcutta, or followed me, as I know you would, if it had been necessary, to Madras.”

“Why,” said the Doctor, “in the first place we got be-devilled in a gale of wind going out, and were forced to run for Rio—there we were kept upwards of two months for repairs, and old Nick knows what—the Dolly is a dull sailor, and we did not get to Sidney till the end of October: in ten days I was on board a ship bound to Calcutta—and in twelve days more, I found the people in her, were beasts—in three weeks after that, I kicked the doctor, and pulled the schipper's nose, for which he is going to trounce me at law when he gets to England. We fell in with a country ship, the *Highgolightly*, homeward bound—so I packed up my traps—out jolly-boat, and aboard of her—and here I am—and there she is,” added MacGopus, pointing to a great, square brute, like a collier, with her masts each raking from the other, like the sticks of

memory, or the uplifted hand of Three Fingered Jack—of Mosely

At their first rencontre George affected to be jocose; but when he and MacGopus were seated alone together, in the cheap, clean, and convenient hostelry of James Town—a house which blends comfort and economy in the most surprising way, he did not lose a moment in expressing, in terms such as MacGopus did not desire to hear, his gratitude for the unexampled kindness and consideration he had evinced.

Their conversation became more and more interesting, and the Doctor discovered (which, if he had thought upon the subject, he must previously have known) that the Captain had not yet heard the news which he had seen in the English papers since his arrival at St Helena, of the death of Mrs Harbottle.

“Ah,” said George, “then there ends my last hope about Emma. Fanny perhaps might have prevailed upon her to receive—a repentant sinner—a returned truant—but now —”

“—She would not receive you,” said MacGopus, “if you had the whole bench of Bishops at your heels—so don’t fret about that.”

“My dear MacGopus,” said George, “I can neither argue nor confute. I regret the loss of that poor amiable woman; and feeling myself so much mixed up in affairs nearest her interests.”

“Quere, now—how?” said the Doctor.

“Why, am I not her husband’s executor?” said George.

“If you had been his executioner, you would have done no great harm,” replied MacGopus.

“Come now, my dear friend—for so indeed and truly have you proved yourself,” said George—“let us endeavour to agree—and above all, in one point—namely, that of your immediately shifting your quarters out of that most lumbering craft, the Highgolightly, into the Honourable Company’s Ship, Sir Timothy Wadd—in which, as there is a cabin to spare, we can accommodate you.”

“I can’t do that,” said the Doctor; “because three days after I came on board the Highgolightly, I quarrelled with all the passengers, and sent them all to Coventry. And I can’t leave her till we get to England, lest I should make them too happy, and they should think I was deserting my principles.”

“Pshaw!” said Sheringham, “what idle trash—come to us—come to me? You have put it out of my power to doubt your friendship—come —”

“Ah!” said MacGopus, “to be sure, you are ill—and sad—and sorry. I’ll just step over to Portis’s, and see the schipper—give him my opinion of his passengers, and send my traps on board. Quere—what d’ye call the Hon. Company’s ship?”

“The Sir Timothy Wadd,” said Sheringham, “which, I assure you, with the hencoops, and bottle-racks, stowed amid-

ships, and the Honourable John Company's stripes flying, had the honour of being taken for an American seventy-four."

"None of your jibes, Mister George," said MacGopus, "recollect what Dance did to Linois, before you were born or soon after. These fellows may be tea-dealers for all I know, but rely upon it whenever there's occasion for it, they'll try what their Gunpowder can do to save their Hyson."

"A pun, Mac," said George.

"I believe it's the first I ever let," said MacGopus: "it shall be the last."

It is curious to witness natural effects. Never was a hydrangia, hanging its cauli-flowery head, more rapidly revived into a state of erect healthfulness by a gallon of water, than was the captain re-invigorated by thus meeting with his excellent Doctor. He had confidence in his friendship, and faith in his skill, and the change worked in his spirits, and consequently (since the greatest part of his disorder was nervous), upon his health, was miraculous.

Their arrangements completed, away bowled the H. C. S. Sir Timothy Wadd, bearing within her ample ribs, the convalescent George and his invaluable but extraordinary friend. The art and science of navigation are now brought to such a nicety, and more especially in the East India Company's service, where every officer undergoes a course of probationary work to fit him for his duty, that it would interest a reader quite as much to give him the history of the journey of an omnibus from Paddington to the Bank, as it would to present him with the log of this Sir Timothy Wadd—the only difference between the passages, is the frequency of touching in the one case, which does not certainly occur so often in the other; however, the end justifying the means, and the means having produced a more justifiable end, we have only need to know that the aforesaid Sir Timothy Wadd reached Deal in the middle of the night, between the first and second of June, when it was just sufficiently light for MacGopus to make out the outlines of the land, and congratulate himself that he was back again in bonny England.

George Sheringham and his friend landed immediately, and proceeded to Mr Wright's at Dover, whence, when they had rested themselves for the night, they proposed to proceed to London.—All these intentions were fulfilled, and in the morning they quitted the Ship Inn for the metropolis, George so wonderfully recovered from his severe illness, as only to exhibit proofs of improved health—and MacGopus in a humour which deserved to be recorded with the whitest of all stones.

The intelligence of Sheringham's having been invalided had reached England in the preceding January or February, and consequently, his London agent, instead of forwarding his letters had retained them all; so that upon his arrival at his office, he found, literally, heaps of correspondence. To open these com-

munications in any thing like chronological order was a vain attempt, and therefore taking a whole summer's day to read through them, he received facts the most incongruous, and intelligence the most anomalous. He found, however, that his mother had been driven to the opposite coast, and that the person to whom she had sold her house at Binford had paid no rent to the original landlord, that every thing there was in a dreadful state of confusion, and that the aristocratic name of Sheringham did not stand quite so high as it previously had done in those parts. He found, moreover, several letters from Mr Snell, stating in different forms, that the Court of Chancery had called upon all persons in account with the estate of Lord Sheringham, to pay up the amount of his claims forthwith; and he found himself threatened on his arrival in England, with a process to enforce that payment, which would instantly deprive him of his liberty, and consign him to prison or life, or at least until the claim was satisfied.

Poor George—how highly had his expectations been exalted—how deeply had they fallen—what was he to do—follow his mother, whose flight from England had so seriously annoyed him—or consent to remain a captive during his whole existence—and all these perils and difficulties had fallen upon him without his having committed one single act of vice or folly. One letter at length caught his eye—the writing of the superscription was familiar to it—he broke it open and read—

"Grosvenor-square, Sept. 18, 1832. "

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN SHERINGHAM—I write this letter, and according to advice which I have received at the Admiralty Office, direct it to be left at your agent's, so that it may catch you as soon as you reach London. Many things have happened since your departure from amongst us—some, I fear, most disagreeable in their nature—as far as I am able, I shall have great pleasure in smoothing over difficulties which may threaten your personal comfort and peace of mind.

"I conclude, you are acquainted with the death of our excellent suffering friend, Mrs Harbottle—her heart was broken, and she sank under her afflictions—you perhaps do not know that she has bequeathed the whole of her vast property to my daughter; and still more, perhaps, shall I surprise you, when I tell you that my child has purchased the house whence I date this, from your successor, the present Lord Weybridge, who, it appears, under the persuasion of Mr Crabshaw, his tutor, prefers a residence in France to one in England, and has, after a short residence in London, returned to Paris for a permanency.

"That we should be in possession of a residence which you intended for yourself, may, according to your view of the case—or may not be—a reason why we should solicit the pleasure of seeing you in it, but that is matter for after consideration.

"Mrs Harbottle, whose interest in you was extremely strong,

conscious of the involvements in which the extraordinary circumstances of your temporary possession of the title and estates of Weybridge would infallibly entangle you, bequeathed to me in trust, such a sum as should entirely clear you from all difficulties on that score ; and I have great pleasure in informing you, that in pursuance of her dying request, I have paid over to the account of the present Lord Weybridge, by the hands of Messrs Wickins, Snell, and Sibthorpe, the sum of twenty-one thousand three hundred and seven pounds eighteen shillings and ten pence, being the full and entire amount of their claim against you —”

“What on earth have I done !” said George, his eyes overflowing with tears, “to deserve this of any human being” —he took up the letter again and resumed.

“All that our dear friend added after she had expressed her wish with regard to this point, was—entreat him to remember what, he knows, I considered my dying request at the time I made it.”

George could read no farther at the moment—too well did he remember the dying request—too well did he know that he could not now fulfil it—what a metamorphosis—the Lovells domesticated in what was once his house—Binford exchanged for Grosvenor Square—every thing seemed to conspire against him—now would he be spurned, rejected and disdained indeed—he read—

“My daughter, who has suffered greatly from illness since the death of her poor friend, is somewhat better. We shall be happy if you *will* come to us here, should we be in London when you arrive. I ought perhaps to add, that I have resigned my living at Binford in favour of my excellent and exemplary curate, and too happy was I to find the good Bishop of my diocese ready to second my wishes for the promotion and happiness of as deserving a man as ever lived.”

“What am I to do, MacGopus,” said George to the Doctor.

“Go to them,” said the Doctor, “they have hearts—they have souls—God bless them !—go to them.”

“What,” said George, “to the Parson’s daughter !”

“Yes,” replied MacGopus, “do you hesitate.”

“No,” said Sheringham.

“If you do,” said MacGopus, “read this, or let me read it. It’s merely a paragraph out of a newspaper—will you hear it !”

“If it is not long—yes.”

“The lady who last week eloped from her ancient husband, with Captain Fuztip, of the Lancers, is, we regret to say, the lovely and accomplished Lady K—— H——, daughter of the Duchess of M——.” “Is not that consolatory. And now, my friend, I will tell you another fact :—The picture that dear creature painted of you, and which she, or her mother, crammed behind the sofa when she found out you were not a lord, is now stuck over the door of a beer-shop, not forty yards from the

gates of Severnstoke, and does duty for the sign of Leopold, King of the Belgians. This I have just heard—go—go—go—go!”

“Hang the picture,” said George, “what do I care? but tell me, do you think Emma will receive me—and to my own house?—how strange!”

“Quere—how your own?” said the Doctor, “it never was yours—you never had any right to it—go along.”

“Come with me,” said George.

“I will.”

And so they went—either of them commanding the other, and neither exactly knowing what they were going for. They quarrelled a good deal on the way, and the only thing in which they really agreed, was in arriving at the door of the house at the same moment. MacGopus knocked—Sheringham rang—thus for once they pulled together. Lovell was at home—they were admitted. The worthy man, unaltered in his manner, received them both cordially. George trembled as he had never done before in his life—a thousand ideas rushed into his mind—a thousand recollections—a thousand fears and all the consciousness of what was past.

Lovell saw it all.

“My dear Sheringham,” said the venerable and excellent man, “the last year or two of your life have been marked by strange vicissitudes, and events of great importance, for little people have fallen upon those with whom you have been intimately connected. All *that* is past—now hear me. You are going to see Emma—the best of children—devoted to her father as her father is devoted to her. Mark me: she is too full of feeling—too much overpowered by the prospect of this interview to speak. I must therefore speak for her. Your mutual attachment has long been known to me—all this, you are aware of—there needs no discussion on that point. You recollect our last conversation?”

“Perfectly, sir,” said Sheringham.

“At that period,” said Lovell, “she had established a principle which I entirely approved—she acted upon it, and I supported her; but never, from the moment she first was conscious of your defection, did she attribute the alteration in your conduct to yourself. I speak here to you, and before our friend—for so let me call him—openly and without disguise; she knew the workings of that powerful influence under which you permitted yourself to be led away and estranged. All this, which she believed, has been brought more fully to her knowledge since. But she respected the motives which induced the exercise of that influence, and shrank from the idea of opposing it. Now, I repeat, that is past. Time has done all that was necessary to establish her first belief—and for the rest,—all is forgiven—all forgotten.”

“Oh, sir,” said George, “how have I deserved this?”

"That Emma herself must tell you," said her father. "She feels, and I feel too, that matters are changed, and that she now can—and I can justly and honourably permit her to do so—become a member of your family without being looked upon as an unwelcome intruder. As for *your* conduct, which might be inexplicable to others, she justifies it in your filial devotion. She always held that opinion—she always vindicated you upon that consideration. The first impulse of her heart will be—if all goes as I pray it may—to place Lady Frances, who so much misunderstood her, in the enjoyment of ease, content, and happiness, of which I fear her exorbitant and ravenous creditors have for the present deprived her."

"My dear sir," said George, "what am I to say—am I to believe this real?"

"Here," said the Rector, throwing open the door of the adjoining room, "is the living witness to the truth of all I have said."

And there stood Emma, looking more lovely than ever—trembling with agitation, and the hope—the dread—the joy of seeing George. Words would not have answered in such a position of affairs. Lovell *had* spoken—he had told his daughter's story. Sheringham rushed forward, and caught her to his heart—she burst into tears, and her head sank on his shoulder.

MacGopus, who, as we know, had previously proved himself so true a friend, maintained his character on the present occasion, and shut to the door of the next room, and engaged Lovell in gentle converse.

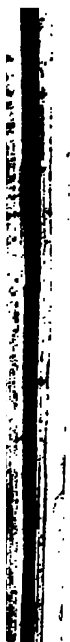
"Never," said MacGopus, "was there a more noble creature than that, sir—proud, indeed, may you be of such a daughter. While George was great, and high, and mighty, she scorned and repulsed him; now that he is a beggar, she receives him to the heart in which her first affection was cherished. Go into his family with discredit!—be regarded by them with coldness—no! she enters it triumphantly."

Lovell took the hand of MacGopus, and pressed it fervently. George and Emma joined them in a moment afterwards. She, poor girl, was incapable of uttering a word;—George, nearly overcome, rallied strength enough to stammer out—"this—this is, indeed, the happiest moment of my life."

"No such thing," said MacGopus, taking hold of the trembling Emma, and supporting her on his arm; "—Quere now—wont you be happier when you are married?"

They were all happy.

That the event added much to such felicity, it is scarcely possible to say, but the truth is, that in less than two years the young Lord Weybridge died, and George became really possessed of the title and estates, the "PARSON'S DAUGHTER" became a Peeress of the realm, and her husband the happiest man, and the best father living.





1

Jul 10 1915

